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THE LIFE

AND

TIMES OF DANTE.

BY

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23012

" Dal mondo scese ai ciechi abissi, e poi
Che l'uno e l'altro inferno vide, e a Dio
Scorto dal gran pensier vivo salió,
E ne diè in terra vero lume a noi.

" Stella d'alto valor coi raggi suoi
Gli occulti eterni a noi ciechi scoprio,
E n'ebbe il premio al fin, ch'l mondo rio
Dona sovente ai più pregiate eroi;

" Di Dante mal fur l'opre conosciute,
E'l bel desio da quel popolo ingrato,
Che solo ai giusti manca di salute.

" Pur fuss'io tal! Ch'a simil sorte nato,
Per l'aspro esilio suo con la virtute
Darei del mondo il più felice stato."

MICHAEL ANGELO.

LONDON:
J. F. HOPE, 16, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1858.

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PREFACE.

A GREAT number of biographies of Dante have been written. In Italy, the most ancient of all, is the well-known work of Boccaccio, and the most modern, the life written by Count Balbo. They both are generally considered as the best authorities on the subject. The latter, published in 1839, has a well established fame for its excellence, despite its dearth of historical information. Its accomplished and patriotic author did not draw in sufficient abundance from the narratives of Dino Compagni and Villani, the cotemporaries of Dante, nor from the archives, which have since been ransacked by others. As to the numberless biographical sketches of the poet, annexed to the innumerable editions and translations of the poem, they are all more or less incomplete and inaccurate.

But of late years especially, many researches have been made, and new documents have appeared, on the life and works of Dante. Besides

a great number of enthusiastic Italian students of the Florentine poet, A. W. Schlegel, Ozanam, Fauriel, Witte, Philalethes (the King of Saxony), have thrown a purer light on several portions of both. Our residence in Italy has enabled us to consult original documents—to listen to the traditions of the people,—and study on the monuments, in the cities, as well as the rural scenes, the traits of the national character immortalised by the poet. Witte, Pelli, Picci, Roncioni, have furnished us with many details of surpassing interest, some of which are novel, and others—the reality of which had long been doubted—are corroborated by their investigations. Our more especial obligations to the most recent students of Dante, are self-apparent in the following pages. We have not hesitated to prefer useful compilation to worthless originality, as it will be seen, when we have found noble and valuable truths, admirable thoughts stated by others. Finally, we have collected all our reminiscences and notes of many years, and have endeavoured to give a faithful account of the adventures, labours, sufferings, and of the influence, of that lofty, unearthly figure, of Dante Alighieri—whose extraordinary nature was so

idealize every thing,—who, although the creator of his terrible *Inferno*, and, endowed with a soul of adamant, nevertheless, evinced a heart-breaking sensibility, in his love for his fatherland, and in his pure everlasting passion for his Beatrice,—a passion, that appears like a lovely flower fallen from Heaven, in the midst of the bloody ruins of mediæval Italy.

The life and genius of Dante, are intimately interwoven with the history and manners of his native city. Love and politics especially, have inspired the *Divina Commedia*. Both burnt intensely in the soul of the poet, and Florence beheld their development: she was the scene of their harrowing vicissitudes. The name of Florence, moreover, cannot fail to awake dreams of glory, national felicity and human perfectibility. That fair city has been the cradle of the civilization, now so flourishing among the western nations; she must ever remain a source of inspiration, as well as a model for the formation of judgment, to all those whose ideas and sentiments love to dwell on imposing images, on noble deeds, and a sublime poetry. Whoever has studied the history of Florence, and the poem of her great Bard, should visit that glorious city, skirted round

with her lovely green hills,—gaze on her soil, so often bathed with the blood of her citizens, embellished by the genius of her artists, immortalised by the song of Alighieri. Every cultivated mind must experience pure, ennobling emotions on beholding that nook of Europe, where the remnants of science, arts, and of ancient philosophy, were saved from destruction.

But, on the other hand, if the remembrance of the great days of mediæval Italy, engender throbings of admiration, the spectacle of the prostrate state of modern Italy, cannot fail to cast a deep gloom over the heart of every lover of justice. A celebrated diplomatist of our time, Mr. de Metternich, seemed to have believed that every spark of vitality had fled from the unfortunate victim. "L'Italie," he once said, "n'est qu'une expression géographique." The history of Italy, however, is a permanent refutation of the Austrian fallacy. The Italians form a nation. They have often proved it; and, as observed by Burke, a nation is a moral essence, not a geographical description.

It is an irrefragable truth that, since the fall of the Roman empire, one same race or family, has grown and developed itself, at the south of the

Alpine chain. That race has ever and faithfully exhibited the same identical characteristics, despite the most eventful vicissitudes, and an extraordinary variety of forms of government. It has preserved the same faith, the same language, and created a magnificent realm of literature and art. It is no less an irrefragable truth, that Italy has never ceased to appreciate the fundamental elements of her nationality, viz:—unity and liberty; and that, in the pursuit of both, she has displayed—although unsuccessfully, an energetic perseverance, worthy of a better fate. It is a matter of wonder, that, weighed down under such a combination of unprincipled and material powers, her efforts, to shake off the loathsome dust of despotism, can have been so numerous, so pure, and so heroic. It is well known by all—even by those who will not confess it, and who are the instruments of despotism—it is well known—that thraldom stifles all the noblest sentiments in their very germ, and that national virtues and public spirit can neither grow nor flourish on a land where freedom does not breathe.

The Italians are endowed with peculiar personal traits of superiority: they are eminently sociable, frank, intelligent,—with a flexibility of

intelligence, and a gentleness in their manners, common to all classes; they are gifted with an imagination that has left in their hands the sceptre of the fine arts. Dugald Stewart considers that, in Italy, more than any other corner of the learned world, is to be found the rare balance of imagination and of the reasoning powers, in which the perfection of the human intellect is allowed to consist. Finally, the germs of great things are still living in the modern Italians. Venice with her Manin—Venice, whose heroism in 1849, called forth the enthusiastic intercession of the late lamented Archbishop of Paris—Piedmont, with its high-minded sovereign, at this very day – are a magnificent, heart-stirring protestation against the calumniators of Italy; they are the noble heralds of the futurity of the Peninsula.

No doubt we do at times behold events which seem to retrograde the civilization of ages; but the spirit of justice and truth defies destruction; it never can be drowned by any storms or by any waves. No doubt degrading principles and despicable men seem to triumph in every political struggle; and society often seems to be delivered over from the hands of one set of criminals into those of another set of criminals, often worse.

Nevertheless, it does not justify despondency. There is one eternal cause, great and beneficent, towards which tend, irresistibly, all human movements, during ages and ages. The enlightened world is fully aware, we believe, that evil agencies, the efforts of all the evil passions, revolutions in opinions, that all, are but atomic obstacles drowned in the great progressive stream. Nothing beautiful and good perishes in this world; neither liberty, poetry, virtue, nor justice. And when a passing cloud ever and anon renders them invisible to the human eye, when they are momentarily eclipsed, and faithless mortals are thus encouraged in the belief that they have perished; they soon after, are beheld again, re-kindled and bright, as if they were as immortal as the human souls which they ennoble.

The great Florentine poet is, perhaps, more than is thought of, a link of unity, a bond between the hearts of the Italians, from the lamentably prostrate Venice down to the strait of Messina. Dante was the prophet of the reign of God on earth, namely, of such a system which God has prescribed. The middle ages were yearning for it; but in vain. In vain floods of blood and tears have been shed in the search

of it. Dante has shewn in burning types the iniquities and turpitudes of modern societies; the more so, as he was animated by a pure, earnest faith in the goodness of man. He has been the greatest asserter of liberty, the most illustrious defender of truth; and, we believe, that his spirit will animate all the sons of the fair Peninsula in their future united efforts to banish the foreign oppressors, and trample under foot the chains of despotism. It is true that all the partisans of absolutism, all the enemies of liberty and of social progress, are incessantly vociferating that *order* is reigning in Italy. Most certainly; but that order is execrable. It is a state of leaden langour. It is the order thus defined by the poet—

Questa morte
D'ogni idea sublime che ordin si chiam...

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CORK,
January, 1858.

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LIFE AND TIMES OF DANTE.

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THE societies which emerged from the ruins that covered Europe after the invasions of the barbarians, proceeded but slowly in their formation, in consequence of the obstacles and resistances that impeded their progress in every direction. This progress is still continuing, and its prospective movements are the hope and consolation of our

age. Those new societies were the result of a spontaneous action, arising from the immutable laws that regulate humanity, and from those laws inherent in human nature; their progressive movements, although tardy, were the consequences of the principles of Christianity, blended with the modified and limited revival of many portions of the ancient civilization. In this general movement—in the phases of these vivifying evolutions,—Italy was in advance of the other nations. The Renaissance of Italy commences with the reign of Frederick II. in the south and with the Lombard league in the north. The first seeds of liberty date from those periods, and their growth will never be stifled. Ideas inherent in human dignity cannot be destroyed by material force. In the midst of this great period of the history of Italy—so pregnant with vitality and energy, and, for that very reason agitated by violent commotions—stands the grand figure of Dante. He appeared when war was raging in the whole Peninsula—between feudalism and the spirit of freedom fermenting in the bosom of the populations—between rival republics, and between hostile parties in each republic. In this sanguinary chaos, the populations of Italy were animated by an ardent and wondrous faith in a better future; hence their heroism, unceasing sacrifices and perseverance, despite the atrocity of their sufferings and the calamities they underwent: such are the great days of Hope, when whole populations are instinctively attracted towards something great and unknown. Such hopeful times of instinctive activity are the great immortal epochs in the history of Humanity. What remains

of them, becomes age after age, the object of the study, of the admiration, and of the curiosity of enlightened generations. Among the monuments of those immortal epochs, none are greater than the *Divina Commedia*, a magnificent bridge or portico, between the past and the future, and, if the poem reflects the inmost nature, the opinions, passions, and adventures, of the Poet, it is also intimately connected with the age that beheld its appearance.

It would be impossible, therefore, to appreciate fully the life of Dante, without obtaining previously a partial knowledge of the laws, public manners, institutions, and of the factions which exercised a powerful influence over his destiny. The subject being a very extensive one, can only be summarily treated on this occasion, and we must confine ourselves to a sketch of that portion of it which is indispensable to a biographical study of Dante. The reader will find many accurate details on every thing that refers to Tuscany, in Captain Napier's "Florentine History," and in the "*Florence et ses Vicissitudes*," by Mr. Delecluze. The origin and organization of Italian feudalism were very nearly similar to those of the other parts of Europe. The Italian soil was divided amongst Dukes, Marquises and Counts, who were represented by delegates in the sub-divisions and in the secondary cities. The bishops having obtained several of those fiefs, were thus invested with a political authority, besides their ecclesiastical power. And that higher feudal society was in the full enjoyment of all the usual unlimited privileges of government that characterize feudalism. It afterwards divided in two classes, namely: the

rural nobility, with its fortified castles, surrounded by the villages and boroughs of the poor oppressed serfs, and the urban nobility, or nobility of the cities, inhabiting also their fortresses, always raised in some wild and commanding position.

But the inhabitants of the cities had remained free. They had preserved some vestiges of the Roman empire—some of the customs and habits of self-government of the old civilization. They had grown rich through their industry, commerce, and good administration; and, as usual, with prosperity arose the sentiment of dignity, along with the consciousness of their power. In one point, especially, the feudalism of Italy differed from that of the other countries of Europe. Wherever the feudal government had been established, the head of the government was a native of the country, residing among those whom he governed; attending to the maintenance of order as well as to the exigencies of the political movements. In Italy, on the contrary, the head of Italian feudalism was a foreign prince, who inhabited transalpine regions, a man of another race, speaking another language. The Germanic emperors claimed the inheritance of Charlemagne, as Emperor of the West; and, although ages had elapsed: although not a shadow of right existed to justify their pretensions, they continued to consider themselves as the legitimate sovereigns of Italy. Surrounded by their Germanic hordes, they, in succession, merely appeared in the fair Peninsula, in order to be crowned, leaving behind them, fearful traces of their ravages, along with feelings of horror and hatred among the people. Such a strange and outrageous system engen-

dered consequences very peculiar to Italy, and reveals to a great degree, as it will be seen, the singular destiny of that country during the middle ages.

The sovereignty over Italy, claimed and assumed by the emperors of Germany, was naturally very odious to the Dukes, Marquises, Counts and Bishops of the Italian feudalism, who aspired to be independent of that power, but, instead of uniting together in order to resist it, they waged petty wars with each other; the weaker in the struggle appealing to the intervention of the emperor, in order to save himself from destruction; and thus calling for the exercise of that very authority which they detested. The absence of unity was then, and has never ceased to be, to this very day, the great and sad cause of the degradation and misfortunes of Italy. The feudal lords, besides the petty wars they waged to each other, were also frequently exposed to the hostility and attacks of their vassals, whom they oppressed unmercifully; these also had recourse naturally to the protection of the Germanic emperor, who thus found other opportunities of interfering with the government of Italy, and of maintaining his own authority. The emperors enacted several laws for the protection of the vassals against the higher powers of feudalism; nevertheless, the mass of the Italian people continued to be oppressed, and to abhor their respective lords. In the rural districts they had no means of resistance, whilst the inhabitants of the cities, united by a similarity of feelings and interests, commenced by manifesting symtoms of resistance, and, gradually advancing in power and

enlightenment, they menaced proudly their tyrants.

Such a state of hostility between the people of Italy and the feudal classes, commenced with the eleventh century; it continued incessantly on the ascendant; it filled the whole Peninsula with endless sanguinary contentions, with the usual alternatives of victories and defeats. Each party required a rallying point, or a head; the emperor became naturally that of feudalism, and the people found theirs in the Pope. The Pontiffs had long since banished their illusions respecting the benefits that Christian civilization and social order were to derive from the elevation of Charlemagne to the empire of the West, along with the revival of the great name of Roman empire. The hope of the Pontiffs had been to constitute one great Christian family—one great political state, under the protection of an enlightened and powerful authority. After the dissolution of the Carolingian empire, after the endless partitions which gave rise to almost as many states as there were cities and boroughs, the glorious titles of King of the Romans and Emperor of the West, were still awarded to the emperors of Germany, despite their limited dominions and their elective dignity. The Germanic emperors considered themselves legitimately in possession of a political authority over Italy, whilst the Pontiffs could not attach the same sense to those titles, nor entertain the same hopes from their existence, since Europe and its political state had undergone a complete change. During a hundred and fifty years, from the reign of the first real Germanic emperor, Arnulf, to the accession of Henry IV., all those sovereigns

considered the exercise of their prerogatives as Emperors of the West, or of Rome, as their greatest glory. They were appealed to in the quarrels of the Popes with their subjects; they interfered with all the pontifical elections, in all matters of ecclesiastical discipline; they humiliated the pontifical and religious dignity and left it, along with the whole clergy, exposed to the insults, violence and cupidity of a barbarous, armed, feudal caste. Subsequently, a great pontifical regenerator was hailed, namely:—Hildebrand, Gregory VII., whose mighty genius conceived an extensive plan of religious and political restoration. His fierce struggle with the Emperor Henry IV., namely, the war of the investitures, divided the whole of Italy into two camps: the populations of the cities being the most ardent in favour of the Pontiffs, whilst the feudal nobility, with a few exceptions, declared themselves for the imperial cause.

Whatever is known of the incidents and details of this great struggle, belongs to a special history, and has been narrated with warmth and eloquence by de Sismondi. Our subject does not require more than to mark its results. After this war of the investitures, we find all the principal cities of higher and central Italy, having constituted themselves into small, independent republics, each governed by an elective temporary chief, who was honoured with the classical title of Consul. These Consuls were originally selected from the higher classes of the population, from among those nobles who had joined the popular cause, or, from those families that had become enriched by commerce and industry; they governed with all the

prerogatives of a sovereign, but of a limited sovereignty. The Italian ideas of the middle ages, could not admit of the whole authority being entrusted to one sole individual, nor to one single body. The consular government consisted of a Consul, but also of a senate or council, more or less numerous, whose functions were to deliberate with him on the public affairs. Besides this consul, or head of the government, the various classes of the populations of the cities, were organized in distinct corporations, each having its magistrate, who bore also the title of consul. These governments, hastily formed by populations long oppressed, whose oppressors remained still powerful, could not expect much repose and peace. Besides being at times agitated by the exigencies of the people, they had to resist the feudal lords, who fought for the recovery of their authority and privileges. The youthful Republics exterminated the feebler and most unreasonable among them. They treated with others, contenting themselves with the oath of homage and the services due to a suzerain; but several of them continued to resist with extreme energy, and remained still formidable. Feudalism in Italy, therefore, was sapped in its very foundation by the new republics, which subsequently waged war with each other, or the most extensive and powerful among them formed alliances, as their respective interests required.

Such was the disorganized state of Italy towards the middle of the twelfth century. The emperors of Germany, as kings of Italy, considered themselves to be natural protectors of the feudal nobles; they could not remain indifferent to their

degradation. The time had come when, they must either be resigned to lose gradually the theoretical claim of political rights, which the republics did not repudiate, or make one supreme effort for the recovery of that portion of substantial authority, which was already lost. Frederic I, Barbarossa, resolutely undertook to force back the Italian cities to submit to the feudal government, with the Germanic suzerainty; and again ensued one of the most formidable struggles recorded in history—a struggle of nearly thirty years' duration, with the most varied, the most extraordinary, changes of fortune. All the cities formed a league under the auspices of the Pope; and the two parties, representing the two principles of Italian liberty and imperial authority, displayed a surpassing energy and heroic efforts. Finally, the Emperor, after a great disaster, was obliged to yield. The war ended with the peace of Constance, in 1183. The republics retained their form of government, such as they were before the struggle, merely conceding to the empire, such obligations which were compatible with freedom. But after such convulsions, such a disorganization, and their eagerness for immediate ameliorations, their governments could not possess any elements of stability. Their success and aggrandizement, their anxiety to improve their internal state, gave rise to various changes in the cities. One of their greatest difficulties was the organization of justice. The consular authority could not repress all the conspiracies and the crimes of factions—the private vengeances —all the excesses of a people, whose passions were violent, unruly, with manners still fierce

and rude. After various fruitless attempts, the administration of justice was entrusted to a temporary magistrate, a stranger to the city, invested with extensive powers, to whom was given the title of Podesta, expressive of his authority. This innovation was followed by others, until the free cities of Italy attained their highest development. Along with their prosperity, the seeds of discord grew up. Two distinct parties existed in the cities, the one formed by the working men, the *Popolani* comprising the *Plebei;* the other consisting of the nobles, the *Grandi*, of whom there were two classes, namely: those who belonged to the ancient nobility, and the parvenus, or those who had enriched themselves and been ennobled. As the democratical tendencies were progressing, those two classes of nobles divided; the latter opposing violently the pretensions of the former, to keep the government exclusively in their own hands. Hence those complicated dissensions which abound in the history of mediœval Italy, and which generally terminated favourably to the popular cause. Hitherto, the Italians and feudal parties had not been distinguished by any collective appellation; it now became a tacit agreement to designate the two factions by the names of Guelfs and Ghibellins. The two factions of Italian freedom and of Germanic domination, assumed the designation of the two rival houses of Germany, in whose name the old struggle was renewed. When Conrad of Hohenstauffen, Lord of *Weiblingen*, was elected emperor, *Welf*, Duke of Bavaria, opposed him; in the battle fought between the two rivals, the war-cry of the Imperialists was *Weiblingen*, and that of the Bavarians, *Welf*; these two factions divided Germany:

they passed into Italy, where the Weiblingen men, partisans of the imperial authority, became Ghibellins; and the Welf-men partisans of the Pope, became the Guelfs. Subsequently, there existed no longer any Italians, but merely Guelfs and Ghibellins, who, it will be seen, subdivided; and, when the French princes usurped the political position of the Popes, the Guelfs represented the French party, and the Ghibellins the imperial interests.

The Italian republics became either Guelfic or Ghibellines. They continued to wage frequent wars with each other, and to be eternally agitated by domestic feuds. During about forty years, after the peace of Constance, the Guelfs—representatives of Italian nationality, were generally triumphant, until new political events changed the relative state of parties. The throne of Naples becoming vacant in 1189, the Pontiffs invited to fill it, a Germanic prince, Henry VI., the son of the same Frederic against whom they had assisted the resistance of the Lombard cities. This singular policy, so little in accordance with the former political system of the church, augmented suddenly the power of Italian feudalism. The emperor found himself at once at the head of an Italian party and of an Italian army. The consequences of this policy became evident, when Frederic II., son of Henry VI., was crowned King of Germany in 1215,—King of the Romans and Emperor in 1220. After a succession of various events and intrigues, Frederic II. in mortal hostility with three successive Popes, long continued a desperate war against the Italian republics, during which the imperial authority was generally successful. The Emperor

restored many of the feudal lords; he established agents in the cities, and supported all the local petty tyrannies. At his death, in 1250, his natural son, Manfred, continued the same system, threatening with complete destruction the Guelfic party and Italian democracy, when the Pope took a bold measure; he invited Charles of Anjou, brother of Saint Louis, to the conquest of Naples. Charles invaded therefore the kingdom of Naples, but after his victory of Beneventum and the annihilation of the imperial party, he gave a preponderance to the Guelfs, far beyond the wishes of the church of Rome. The Popes, at this period, did not entertain any of the gigantic plans of Gregory VII., and of Innocent III., but still they claimed a general preponderance in Italy. Such were their views when they manifested their intention of protecting the republics against the emperors; now, it did not suit their policy that the Anjous and the Guelfs should assume the ascendency. Their wish had ever been to conciliate the two parties, to establish a balance between both, in order to direct them, and command their united forces. The Popes, therefore, became indifferently, Guelfs or Ghibellins, and generally joined the feebler faction, in order to weaken the one that triumphed.

The institution of the office of Podesta, in the free cities of Italy, dates from the very commencement of the twelfth century, long before the peace of Constance. There was a Podesta at Parma, in 1165; another at Padoua, in 1174. A few years after, Trevisa, Lodi, and Bologna, each appointed a Podesta. In the thirteenth century, all the other cities, whenever they had the liberty

to do so, followed their example. It is very probable, however, that the duties and prerogatives of the office, were very different in their origin, from what they appear to have been towards the middle of the thirteenth century; they evidently underwent many perfecting changes, and gradually became invested with characteristics often assimilated to those of a temporary Viceroy or of a governor.

Originally, the functions of Podesta only lasted one year; he was very rarely re-appointed. No relations were permitted to accompany him; even his wife was not always allowed to remain with him. The Podesta and the functionaries accompanying him, or associated to him, were forbidden from holding any familiar intercouse with the citizens; they were expressly forbidden from giving or accepting invitations to banquets and festivals. We can form a judgment of the importance of the duties of the Podesta, by a singular fact, which connects, as it were, the political history of Italy, with the history of her literature. Brunetto Latini, Dante's teacher—one of the first Italians who cultivated the vernacular language of his country, wrote in the second half of the thirteenth century, a work entitled, the *Tresor*, a sort of compendium of the literary and scientific knowledge of his age. The ninth and tenth books of this work, written in the *langue d'oil*, and intending to be a political treatise, consist wholly of a faithful and general account, of all the duties and attributes of the office of Podesta; in comparing that mode of government to those of Europe, he awards to it the pre-eminence, because of its being more conducive to

the welfare of the community at large; he derives from it the genuine ideas and principles of Italian liberty, and, he is an irrefragable testimony of the high position of the Podesta. It is in the natural course of human events that several of the Podestas violated the laws of duty and of honour, whilst others proved themselves pure heroes, or, by their wisdom contributed greatly to the prosperity of the cities which appointed them. History has stigmatized the former and celebrated the deeds of the latter, in transmitting them to posterity.

The Italian republics, as stated before, were in constant hostility with each other, and their military organization was intimately interwoven with their social and political organization. The corporations of trades formed the militia and the army. There existed, besides them, a principal military corps, entrusted with the standard of the republic and composed of nobles and citizens. The war administration was distinct from the general government, sometimes temporary, at other times permanent; it differed according to the localities. The number of commanders differed also considerably: Piacenza had two Podestas of the militia; Brescia and other cities, two war-ministers; Florence, twenty-four war-captains; Padoua, twelve military dictators, who formed a secret council, and who were changed every fifteen days. In their martial manners and systems of war, the Italian republics had adopted some of the most romantic usages of chivalry. Thus, the state that declared war to another, sent to the latter a glove covered with blood carried and presented on a thorn bush; the challenged party

took it up in sign of acceptance of the defiance. Another chivalrous usage was that which required the general, at the moment of commencing the action, to appoint a certain number of horsemen, called *feditori*, whose duty was to dart first on the enemy, strike the first blows, and become by their bravery the heralds of victory. Another feature very characteristic of chivalrous ideas, was the interference of ladies of high rank in military affairs. We must mention one instance of it, which will neither admit of doubt or of contradiction. In 1301, several of the noblest ladies of Genoa, among whom some belonged to the houses of the Grimaldis, the Dorias, the Spinolas &c., offered themselves to go and actually wage war in the Holy Land. Their proposition was submitted to Boniface VIII. and became the subject of several negotiations.

Among the military institutions of the Italian republics, unconnected with the chivalry of Europe, and especially national, the most remarkable, was that of the *Carrocio*. It consisted of a huge, heavy car, richly adorned, clothed in red, in the midst of which was fixed the standard of the city, and drawn by oxen. This car was surrounded by the élite of the army. Its defence was a sacred cause for which all fought to the death; its loss considered as an irreparable opprobrium, was followed by a general mourning. This institution became the origin of a singular mode of warfare that must have been very dissimilar to that of other countries; it gave rise to a singular system of tactics which was, at a later period, perfected by the celebrated Condottieri, Sforza, Braccio and others. But, besides these national

peculiarities, the spirit of these wars was in its manifestations, extremely original. The cities whilst preparing to hostilities, became suddenly transformed into a complete camp. All the inhabitants brought in the struggles, the violence of their opinions and principles—the characteristics of their native ardour, imagination and enthusiasm, along with the stimulants of interest. Hence the defeats were often followed by a deep lasting gloom, and the victories by insane bravadoes. The conquerors generally pursued the vanquished to the very walls of their cities, and there, would, in defiance, hold festivals, distribute rewards, have races, and brave them in every way. Thus, at the battle of Alto-Pascio, the Florentines were defeated by the Pisans, who came under the very walls of Florence; there, they indulged in the most extravagant proceedings, in their rancorous object to insult their foes. Among the circumstances suggested by the flush of victory, and exulting pride, they imagined to ordain young priests on the very spot, at that very moment, and ordered them to celebrate a mass in order to consecrate their victory. The most mortal outrage that could be offered to a besieged city, was to send within its walls, with the engines, the bodies of dead animals, above all, of dead asses.

We have alluded to the democratical pretensions of the cities of Italy: their democratical movements continued on the ascendant, so long as the people continued victorious, and the popular classes gradually succeeded in being admitted to the highest functions. The appointment of Podesta alone was respected by the popular am-

bition, although in several of the republics, the people jealous of his authority, obtained the nomination of a sort of popular Podesta,—a man taken from their own body, to whom they sometimes gave the appellation of *Abbate*, — but, more usually that of *Capitano del popolo*. They remained satisfied with this addition, which seems to have possessed no advantages, and only complicated to a further degree, a political organization that was already too much so, and consequently was embarrassed in its action and movements. These difficulties, and especially the discords that so often broke out at the elections of the Podestas, subsequently induced the republics to appoint the Podesta for life, or for a very long period. Such was partly the origin of those petty tyrannies so frequently met with in the history of Italy, during which, the cities remained sheltered from the storms of their liberty —and the people reposing after long struggles, and a tumultious political existence. Little is known with reference to the manners of these populations of Italy. Whatever has been written on the subject refers to the feudal classes, whose manners, habits and ideas, were characterized by the same rudeness and barbarism as those of the north of Europe. One of their distinctive features was, the personal and hereditary vengeance transformed into a point of honour, despite the ideas of civil justice scattered in the country—remnants of the Roman legislation. They practised the *vendetta*, which, to this very day, cannot be rooted out of Corsica, despite the moralizing influence of the civil laws of France.

Among other traits of barbarism to be met

with in mediæval Italy, and which cast a shade over its chivalrous spirit, we must mention the custom of mutilating and insulting the vanquished enemy, and the cruelty of the laws with respect to the female sex. From the twelfth century, however, there appears an evident change in the manners of all; they became gradually softened and polished, and, it is to be regretted, that the laws, statutes and ordinances of those republics during their progress, should remain buried in numerous archives, not very accessible. They form the palpable testimonies of the participation of those cities in the general civilization of Europe, and of their efforts for the abolition of all barbarous usages, for the diffusion of enlightment, and principles of humanity. Thus, in the archives of Sienna, we have seen, the law forbidding personal vengeance,—another enjoining to respect the bodies of the enemy, and many statutes proving the respect of the city for science, and its anxiety to promote every branch of learning. At a period when chivalry was still in possession of all its prestige, a doctor of laws was considered the equal of a knight; a lofty sentiment of beauty in the arts, is also a pre-eminent feature in the popular genius of Italy at this period. The laws, monuments and institutions of those fair and heroic cities, are a test of the purest instincts of civilization—of that primitive Italian civilization, which will remain to the end of times, the everlasting glory of mediæval Italy.

Florence stands pre-eminent in the midst of that martial and splendid activity of the Italian cities during the middle ages. Her history offers nothing

very certain nor very interesting, down to the end of the eleventh century. We must remain satisfied with the well-established fact, that, in 1102, she was a free city; although little is known about her internal government at this period of her existence, it is, nevertheless, well ascertained, that she merely acknowledged a nominal sovereignty on the part of the emperors of Germany, and not in the least, the former domination of the marquises of Tuscany. It was towards that period that the Florentine government called on all the feudal lords of the territory of the republic and summoned them to recognize her jurisdiction, or be prepared to a war to the death. The majority of these nobles refused to submit, and, during a whole century, from that period, the history of the republic consists of an innumerable series of expeditions and combats, of fortified castles attacked, taken, destroyed, burnt, or occupied by the Florentines. But the nobles of the country had friends and relations among those of the city, and the latter, alarmed by the democratical pretensions, sometimes lent their assistance to the rural nobles, in order to overthrow the popular government; then, the city became constantly a scene of bloodshed, each party being in possession of an armed fortress and of an entrenched camp. In 1167, the Uberti, one of the three most illustrious and most powerful Florentine families, came to an open collision with the consuls. This contention lasted two years, the popular party remaining victorious after its long duration. But the vanquished nobles seized upon a favourable opportunity of avenging their defeats. When the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa

came to Florence, they laid their grievances before him. He hastened to restore them to their feudal castles and privileges, feeling delighted to gratify thus his private hostility towards the Florentines. But as he did not give the nobles any of the means necessary for the preservation of their fiefs, the emperor had no sooner taken his departure, that the Florentines recovered gradually all their conquests, and continued the war in the view to extend and complete them.

Florence introduced the office of Podesta in the constitution of the republic, in the year 1207. Its object was the same as in the other cities, the administration of justice; it did not interfere with the government of the consuls, which must, however, have undergone many modifications since its foundation. The number of the consuls had formerly been two only, and now they were six.

The council also which assisted them in their deliberations, had been increased and subdivided, besides which, magistrates from the various corporations of arts (trades) had been admitted into these councils. At Florence, as well as everywhere else, the Guelfs represented the popular party, and the Ghibellins, became another denomination for the representatives and supporters of the nobility and of feudal interests. Such a social and political division of parties, very simple in itself, became in the highest degree intricate, in consequence of the private quarrels which arose incessantly, and threw these parties into violent agitation and endless subdivisions. In those days, the personal hatred of the Italians were

more deeply rancorous than any inspired by politics; and the former, no doubt often communicated to the latter, much of its ardour and fury. Many individuals who did not entertain any political opinions well defined, who had enemies in one of the two factions, unhesitatingly joined the other, with that southern ardour which has never changed. Thus the civil discords became an instrument of personal vengeance; in the meantime the Florentine democracy continued to develop itself with pride and energy. In 1218, the Republic obliged all the inhabitants of her territory, who had hitherto been the vassals of the various nobles still powerful and independent, to take an oath of fidelity to her government. The object of this measure was to deprive at once the nobles of their subjects; it could only be effected by the sword; thus was resumed an incessant warfare; attacks and destructions of castles were renewed, and finally, all the feudal population was proclaimed free.

But the ascendant of the Guelfic or popular party in Florence received a check when the war broke out between Frederic II. and the court of Rome. The emperor being victorious in the struggle, the Guelfs were oppressed in nearly the whole Peninsula; at Florence, after many sanguinary encounters in the streets, they were all driven out of the city. Two years after, however, in 1250, by one of those reactions so common in history, a popular revolution exploded in their favour, and they were all recalled. Their victorious return induced them to reform the constitution of the republic and extend its democratical tendency. This new, or reformed constitution,

celebrated in the history of Florence, by the denomination of *popolo vecchio* or *primo popolo*, is the most faithful expression of the heroic, poetic, honourable, and original spirit of the Florentine character in the middle ages. With the people of Florence, far more than of any other city of Italy—liberty embodied the fairest virtues of chivalry, generosity, magnanimity, and courteousness. And it is this liberty which became at Florence the all-animating foundation of her greatness.

Nothing in history is more admirable than the order and regularity with which were developed in the Florentine republic, the great elements of civilization, and the progress of an enlightened intelligence, despite the frequent vicissitudes of her government. She had scarcely shaken off the imperial yoke, when she regularly organized her commerce. In 1200, the republic was in full possession of the two vital blessings of a nation, namely, political independence and the requisite means of well-being for the citizens. These were, however a mere point of departure, a fragmentary portion of her greatness, for, in intellectual activity and in glory, she became superior to, and far in advance of, the other states of Europe. The other nations were generally, till the sixteenth century, distinguished by some special faculties; most of them had been warlike, monarchical, and having adapted the Roman legislation to their habits and manners, they acquired more or less power through material agencies, commencing with the fifteenth century only, to cultivate the sciences, arts and letters.

But, at Florence, the development of the intel-

lectual faculties, commenced three centuries sooner, and in a contrary order. Poetry appears first, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the arts came afterwards, and were followed by the sciences, in the seventeenth century. Florence therefore, was truly the Athens of the middle ages. Besides the analogies in the constitutions of the two celebrated republics; they both offer —and alone in the history of the world—the splendid and singular phenomenon of a parallel and simultaneous development of poetry, philosophy and the arts. At Athens, more than two thousand years ago—and at Florence during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries of our era, the arts and letters, far from remaining an isolated recreation, independent of religion, politics and manners, as with most other nations, were, on the contrary, the vital principles of their greatness. The sentiment of all that is great, noble and beautiful, of which the arts are but the expression, have ever been in Greece and in Tuscany, one of the great constituting elements of civilization. And nothing can contribute more effectively to humble human pride, than the earnest study of the history of those nations whose existence has exhibited the greatest splendour and the most laudable efforts to attain a higher state of civilization. Oh, inscrutable Providence! the thirteenth century was the most magnificent, resplendent age of the Florentine republic, and what spectacle have we in the Florence of the nineteenth century!

In the new Florentine constitution of 1250, the Podesta does not appear to have been subjected to any material change in the attributes of

his office, but the *Capitano del popolo* became his adjunct, charged especially with representing the interests of the people in all the acts of the government. The six consuls were replaced by twelve *Anziani*—elders of the people—with the same duties. The military organization was remodelled and enlarged. Every thing that related to the Carroccio, was regulated with the greatest care and precision, so as to satisfy the claim of both the nobles and the people. It was entrusted to the nobles in times of peace, who, as soon as war was declared, were obliged to conduct it to the new market, and make it over to the people, and, the *popolani* had the honour of taking charge of it during the whole duration of the war; they were naturally responsible for its security. The Florentines displayed in their mode of declaring war that chivalrous spirit we have alluded to: as soon as it was resolved to commence hostilities against any city, or any party, a great bell called *martinella*, was suspended under the vault of one of the gates of the city, and it was rang during one month, day and night. It was a manner of warning the threatened enemy to prepare for the defence, for, it would have been considered a disgrace to surprise a foe unprepared, whoever he might be. At other times, the martinella was placed in the center of the Carroccio suspended between two poles, and the Carroccio being brought in the middle of the old market, the bell peeled, day and night, during a certain number of days before the commencement of the campaign—a warning to the citizens to settle their affairs, and prepare their souls to bear bravely the dangers of the impending war.

The whole social and political life of the Florentines evinced their noble and graceful imagination, and to this, they added principles of an austere probity, and of great simplicity. The better dressed citizens wore nothing beyond garments made of plain, coarse cloth, or of skins, without ornaments; the ladies also, were plainly attired, those of the highest rank contenting themselves with thick red cloth robes, with a leather girdle, and mantles, trimmed with fur, with which they covered their heads. Whether it arose from a change in these habits of simplicity, or from a wish to perpetuate them, in 1330, sumptuary laws were promulgated at Florence by which, with a few exceptions, the women were forbidden from wearing pearls, precious stones, gold or silver necklaces, gold or silver brocades, embroidered silks and velvets. The law specified the weight of jewelry permitted, and the length of the lady's collar: it prohibited wearing two silk dresses at the same time, furs, and more than three rings, legislating also upon the length and breadth of the sleeves. In 1472, the sumptuous habits of the table necessitated also the enactment of several special laws, limiting the quantity and quality of dishes for daily use, but with full permission of sumptuous luxuries for the entertainment of strangers and foreigners. These laws, however strange and outrageous they may appear to our modern ideas of liberty, were long observed at Florence, even after the first of the wealthy Medicis, and they certainly contribute to form a just appreciation of the national character of the Florentines.

The new, or reformed government of the

republic, displayed the utmost vigour in humbling the nobles. It ordered the towers of their palaces to be lowered, and thus nullified their military importance. It attacked and subdued various feudal lords of the neighbourhood. It took possession of Pistoia, where the supremacy of the Guelfs was established, the Ghibellins, who had hitherto been the predominant party, being put aside. And, in the midst of civil and military conflicts so multiplied, during the ferment, and explosions of all their passions, the Florentines never belied the principles of honour, and of that heroic integrity which they had so frequently manifested since they were free. The acrimony of factions, the personal and family rancours, never alloyed their sentiments of public justice. We must select one instance of it, among so many to be found in the annals of the city of Florence. In 1255, the Guelfic city of Orvieto was at war with the Ghibellins of Viterbo; the Florentines being the allies of the former, sent to their assistance a troop of 500 cavalry, under the command of one of their most renowned captains, Count Guido Guerra. The count started at the head of his corps, arrived at Arezzo on his way, and there halted. Although Arezzo was governed by the Ghibellins, the city being at peace with Florence, the arrival of the Count with his cavalry did not awake a shadow of suspicion; but the Count taking advantage of the confidence and perfect tranquillity of the citizens, and stimulated by his boldness and ambition, unexpectedly attacked all the Ghibellins, drove them out of the city, and took possession of the government, in the full conviction that he had performed an

exploit, much more to the glory and interests of the Guelfs, than to succour Orvieto as he had been desired to do. But the Florentines entertained a very different opinion. They felt indignant on hearing that the forces of the republic had been the means of a treachery towards a city —hostile, it is true—but with which they were at peace. They flew to arms, arrived at Arezzo, besieged the city, now defended by the Count Guido, took it, and forced him to flight; after which they recalled and reinstated their enemies the Ghibellins, who had been expulsed so treacherously. It is even added that the Count, before his flight extorted from the people of Arezzo a large sum of money which the Florentines hastened to return to them.

This generous and chivalrous population, surnamed the old people, or, the good old people,—displayed once more their manly energy, before they succumbed. In 1258, the nobles, headed by the Uberti, who were the eternal enemies of the popular government, and at the instigation of Manfred, King of Naples, made a formidable attempt to revolutionize the city. Once more they were defeated, and obliged to quit Florence; a great number of Ghibellins were banished at the same time, so great in truth—that having joined the Ghibellins of the whole of Tuscany, they effectively assisted them, in gaining over the Florentines—in 1260—the celebrated battle of Monte-Aperti. A contemporaneous account of this battle has recently been recovered, and has been published at Sienna, entitled: *La Sconfitta di Mont'-Aperti trattata d'un antico manuscritto publicato per Anosato Porri.* In consequence of

this defeat or *discomfiture*, the Guelfs were now obliged to abandon the city for the second time, and leave the government in the hands of the Ghibellins; but seven years after, they all returned to it, and resumed the reins of government, when Charles of Anjou, invited by the Pope to the conquest of Naples, having vanquished Manfred, he restored the Guelfic party, then oppressed in the whole country. From this period, namely, from 1267, the government of Florence remained in the hands of the Guelfs, that is to say, in the hands of the people—the Ghibellins, in the meantime never ceasing to create difficulties—to conspire, in order to obtain at least a portion of the authority; hence, the agitation and disturbances were endless in the republic, and, they became more serious and complicated when the Popes —as observed before,—adverse to the preponderance of the Anjous, and despite their being the heads of the Guelfic party, threw every obstacle in their power that could obstruct the progress of both.

All the dissensions alluded to, and the frequent efforts of the Pontiffs to conciliate both parties, must have occasioned many changes in the details of the government. Without pausing to a narrative of the many modifications of secondary importance, we must speak of the great result to which they conduced, more or less directly, viz.: the new constitution of 1282, denominated in the annals of Italy: the Second People. This constitution is the most complete and lofty expression of the political genius of the Florentines. It is the highest and most perfected development of their political institutions; its most substantial

form and spirit, notwithstanding many subsequent modifications, survived during ages, even after the knell had tolled over that very liberty that engendered its existence and promulgation. According to this new constitution, Florence was governed by three authorities or magistrates, each of which, —besides secondary functions special to each— assumed the initiative, either in common or separately, in government measures, as well as for the execution of those measures, when they had been adopted. These magistracies were: that of the Priors, that of the Captain of the people, and that of the Podesta. The two latter have been mentioned; few unimportant changes were made in the duties of those offices; but the Priors, who replaced the *Anziani*—or elders of the people, became the supreme officers of the Florentine government, and that distinguished office is more especially interesting, as Dante, at the age of 35, was elected to fill it,—an honour which became the source of all his misfortunes. They received the appellation of Priors, or Priors of the Arts, on the authority of these words of the gospel: "*Vos estis priores.*" Their number was in the first instance, limited to three, but subsequently was raised to six. They were changed every two months, and elected by those who were going out of office, a fortnight before commencing their duties. One of the most curious circumstances attached to that dignity, was that the new Priors, once elected and installed in the palace of the people for the exercise of their functions, could not leave it, until they ceased to be Priors; they lived altogether in the palace, and communicated with no one excepting on public business, in the

discharge of their duties. The nobles and the rich alone could be elected to that office, despite the democratical spirit of Florence. It was only under the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, in 1342, that men of the lowest class of the people were selected to fill it.

Every law or measure enacting from the three magistracies mentioned, had to be submitted to the deliberation and approbation of various councils and secondary magistracies, before it could acquire the power and character of law. These councils amounted to seven secondary assisting bodies at Florence, without reckoning other inferior magistracies, called to deliberate with any of them on affairs of great emergency and of the highest importance; their denomination being generally indicative of the number of members that composed them. But the seventh or highest council was called the Parliament General, or simply the Parliament—*Parlamento*. There does not exist any very accurate account of the various functions and modes of deliberation of these councils, or *Collegi*; such details, moreover, would here prove superfluous; two of them, especially, were destined to assist the Captain of the people in his duties. It appears that they were all convoked at the same time—in the same locality—and for the same business, the one having merely to sanction the measures that had been discussed in the other. A very peculiar feature in their deliberations, was, that they had two modes of voting; at first, ostensibly, by sitting and rising, and afterwards by ballot. The Priors seem to have had but one of those auxiliary councils adjoined to them. Those of the Podesta proceeded

with the same forms as the councils of the Captain of the people, with few exceptions; for instance, in the former, no proposition could be presented excepting by the Podesta himself,—no speaker could be interrupted, and not more than four members could speak successively on the same subject, without the permission of the Podesta. Any proposition that had been discussed in—and was enacted by—either of the councils of the Captain of the people, or that of the Priors, had to be submitted to the two councils of the Podesta, and finally to be approved of by a general parliament before it became a law. This parliament was composed of all the other councils of every description—of all the secondary authorities and magistracies of the republic, without exception, and was presided over by the Podesta. Now, in all these assemblies and deliberations, at Florence and the other cities, what was the language spoken? Was it Italian or Latin? It has been sufficiently ascertained that during the whole of the thirteenth century, all the acts and deeds of the council-generals of the Italian republics were written in Latin; such documents abound in the archives of Italy. But it is impossible to come to the conclusion that they were discussed in Latin; it is as inadmissible as the fact, that has sometimes been maintained, that St. Bernard—whose magnificent Latin discourses and orations are so celebrated in history and literature—addressed the people in that language, when preaching the crusade to myriads of fervent and simple Christians, and the multitude having listened to him passionately, rushed *en masse* to take the cross, exclaiming, *Dieix il volt.* There is

no doubt that at Florence, when measures were offered for the discussion and sanction of the illiterate crowd, they were translated into the popular language, and that they must have been discussed in the new vernacular idiom.

The Florentine constitution of 1282, introduced also very remarkable modifications in the organization of the military service. The special war administration was composed of twenty-four *Captains of war*. When hostilities were imminent and an army was to be raised, the military population of the republic was called to arms, namely—all the men from the age of 15 to that of 70; they were all organized in small bodies of 50 men. The army once formed, was divided into two corps, one of them, remained for the protection of the city, whilst the other went in search of the enemy, and this last corps was maintained at the expense of the other that remained at home. This singular mode of meeting the necessity of a war expenditure, has been considered as a mean of great additional power in the military organization of Florence. It certainly enabled the state to have the largest army possible, at the smallest expense possible, but it undoubtedly evinces a symptom of decline in the martial ardour of the people. We have spoken of the *feditori*, those select warriors who offered themselves—or were selected—to have the honour of being the first to provoke and attack the enemy before a regular battle, in order to give a general impetus to the mass.

The constitution of 1282, regulated minutely this mode of proceeding, as if no longer confiding in the general enthusiasm; these assailants were

formed into a regular permanent body, amounting to 250 men, instead of a small number of men of 12 or 20, who spontaneously offered themselves and were accepted. The most extraordinary military fact was, that the office of general did not require any special capacity. The Captain-general was elected in the same manner as the Podesta; and, subsequently, the difficult position of the republic, urgent necessity, induced the citizens to select a warrior of illustrious birth, or military fame—uniting both if possible—but a stranger to the republic; he brought with him, in his pay, a certain number of foot and cavalry soldiers,—sometimes even a small army—which was added to the larger one, to the command of which he was invited. Such was the origin of those celebrated condottieri, with their formidable bands, who frequently became the scourge of Italy during the fourteenth century. At a later period, the Florentines often selected their Podesta to command the army, and sometimes the Captain of the people; finally, in cases of emergency, each of the Priors could be required to command the soldiers of the republic. It is impossible that such an instability in the command—such an irregularity in the higher department of the army, can have existed, during so long a period, during such a period of incessant agitations and hostilities—without having annulled many favourable chances of victories and of conquest. But, on the other hand, with such a system, the Florentines certainly escaped falling under a military despotism, so particularly odious to their ideas and manners. They at all times manifested the strongest aversion for the ascendency of the

sword, and when the fatal day came, on which they must submit to rulers, they selected a merchant who governed them fully, but gratifying them, at least with the forms and appearance of freedom.

Our brief account of this Florentine constitution of 1282, suffices to exhibit its democratical character. Historically speaking, it was, as well as those of the other Italian republics, a progressive development, an ingenious combination of fragments of the former constitutions, with many imitations of the Roman municipalities, and its pre-eminent object was to ensure the largest amount of political rights to the greatest number possible of citizens. During the period when it was in full vigour and operation, Florence was already one of the largest cities of Italy, with above one hundred thousand inhabitants. It was the commencement of the brilliant and immortal phasis of her existence, when, the city contained more than two hundred cloth manufactures, and above one hundred banks of exchange. The following dates as to the embellishments of Florence, taken from Giovanni Villani, are sufficient evidence of the prosperity and taste of the glorious republic:—the streets were covered with flag-stones in 1237; the palace of justice and the prisons were built in 1250; the bridge of the Trinity in 1252; the baptistery was began before 1293; the cathedral in 1294; the *Palazzo Vecchio*, still so grand and perfect, was built in 1289. The walls of the city—the third enclosure of which is still existing—were raised in 1299. And, in a true republican spirit,—if enormous sums were expended on the buildings for the public good

the stipends allowed for the exercise of civic duties were relatively modest. The salary of the Podesta amounted to 15,240 *piccioli;* that of the Captain of the people, to 5,880 ; for the expenses of the Priors, 6,000 ; for musicians, heralds and criers of the Podesta, 1,000 piccioli, &c., &c. The value of the picciolo was equivalent to about six pence. It was much later that the florin became of general use, even in Florence, although it was in 1252, after a victory won over the Siennese, that the Florentines began the emission of the florin. The coin represented on one side the figure of St. John, patron of the city, and on the other the lily, crest of the municipality. The extensive commerce of Tuscany subsequently introduced it in every part of the world, and it was imitated by several nations. But it is only just to add that, the other Italian republics emulated Florence in the splendour of their public buildings, as well as the education and social comfort of the citizens. When a French or English nobleman could not write his name, nearly the whole adult population of the Italian republics, could read and write; and, three-fourths of them conduct the commercial operations of a counting-house. When the feudal system was nursing the lowest barbarism in the rest of Europe, where no property was secure, where the nobles were plunderers, confined in their turrets, with the coarsest necessaries of life, the citizens of the Italian republics were provided with all the social elegancies of any moderate civilian of our time ; their governments were multiplying the populations, extending the resources of the state, by the abolition of villainage in their dominions, and the

extension of free municipal institutions. Finally, all the great architects of our nineteenth century must blush when they visit those splendid palaces raised in the Italian cities during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The government of Florence at this period of 1282 could raise an army of thirty thousand men. The number of those who were qualified with the title of nobles, was about one thousand, comprising three hundred who had received the order of chivalry, and who formed the first rank of the nobility. That body of nobles, however, was insufficient to resist the popular party, whose power was directed with renewed vigour against the enemies of within, as well as those of without. The civil discords of Florence were assuming, in the meantime, a more fearful aspect than ever. The popular party were gradually diverging from the heroic simplicity—from their enthusiasm for honour and justice which had characterized them. Their feelings for chivalrous principles and their generosity, were daily growing feebler. The protracted state of hostility and of conspiracy between the factions, had engendered excessive acrimony as well as unusual cruelties; they now resorted, with exultation, to inflicting upon each other useless destruction and unmanly vengeances.

The Ghibellins returning to Florence, in 1260, after their victory of Monte Aperti, gave the fatal example of destroying the houses and palaces—of ravaging the property of the exiled Guelfs. Retaliation, on the part of the other faction, was in the natural course of human affairs, whilst, it could only excite in the rival party, a thirst for

the exercise of still greater violences. After a long ferment—the revolutionary conflagration exploded in 1292, when the Florentine nobility, so long vanquished by the people, organized a formidable conspiracy against the popular government. After the most sanguinary encounters and fierce combats of several days' duration, the people, headed by Giano della Bella, were once more victorious. This commander of the people was noble by birth, devoted to the popular cause, and at that time invested with the dignity of Prior. He seized upon the opportunity of his influence after the victory, to prepare and cause to be adopted, a new law, celebrated in the history of Florence, and the object of which, was to crush the vanquished nobles, indeed, to annihilate them; this new law received the name of ordinances of justice, *ordini di giustizia*. This law added to the constitution, changed totally many important points of its spirit and object. Thus, it declared for ever excluded from the public magistracies many of the most ancient and powerful families of Florence; it ordered that any noble accused of conspiracy against the popular government should immediately be brought to trial, the public rumour, and the testimony of two citizens, being a sufficient proof of the conspiracy of a noble. A special magistrate, with the title of Gonfalonier of justice, was appointed, charged with the execution of the ordinances. He was to take his seat with the Priors, to be elected in the same manner and for the same duration of time as the Priors, and, moreover, to have under his orders a body of a thousand men, ready to march at the first signal, or, at the first rumoured attempt of any move-

ment on the part of a noble against the people. This new law, introduced by Giano della Bella, became the signal of new civil dissensions, which present a more special interest because Dante found himself plunged into the very midst of them, as it will be seen, when our biographical narrative has attained this period of his life. We will behold him in these turbulent and perilous times, when men's passions both for good and evil, when the contests of freedom and tyranny were fierce and uncontrolled, we will behold him, with his intrepidity, even audacity, in the exercise of his stern justice. Dante during his political career, as well as in the *Divina Commedia*,—attacked fearlessly the reign of vices and crimes. Neither power, rank, nor temporal and ecclesiastical dignities could influence him. Nothing could shield the criminals.

CHAPTER II.

Hero worship.—Great conquerors.—Great poets.—Mr. Ruskin on Dante.—Ancestors of the poet.—Birth and childhood of Dante.—Traditions on the subject.—His education.—His master Brunetto Latini.—The TESORETTO.—The TRESOR.—General subjects, studied in the thirteenth century.—The seven Arts.—The STUDI.—Knowledge of Dante.—His boyhood and youth.—Beatrice.—His love and her influence.—The SALUTE.—Influence of women since the Christian era—First Sonnet of Dante.—Its popularity.—Guido Cavalcanti.—Marriage and death of Beatrice.—Sorrow of the poet.—His subsequent occupations.—The VITA NUOVA.—Observations on the VITA NUOVA.—Dante commences his political career.—Dissensions in the republic of Pisa.—Count Ugolino.—His history.—Battle of Meloria.—Policy of Ugolino.—His ambition.—His rivals.—His family.—Ruggieri.—Infatuation of Ugolino.—His fall.—His death.—Historical events and characters in connection with Dante.—Battle of Campaldino.—Adventures and impressions of the poet.—His marriage and its consequences.

WE conceive it to be one of the tendencies of our age, and more especially among those western nations so proud of their civilization, to overrate the real character of great men. Hero-worship is certainly one of the peculiar features of our time, and its exaggerations lead to the consideration of great men, without any regard to the foundation of their greatness, to the popular movements, or popular yearnings, of which they are the expression, as, if in the contemplation of a beautiful statue, we did not conceive that its fair form must stand upon a basis. Moreover, a great confusion exists, to our mind, with reference to hero worship, between great men-conquerors, and great men

purely literary. The records of history establish abundantly, that, generally the average evil derived from great conquerors, pretty nearly balances (often goes far beyond) the amount of good that nations have derived from them. Literary great men, besides being also the representatives and expression of a people, more exclusively clear, the moral and intellectual chaos of our world; they more especially scatter the seeds of science and song, so that the germs of love, justice, and liberty, may be multiplied. Their thoughts and feelings never remain confined within boundaries; the spirit they breathed diffuses itself ever and ever. But a great poet, above all, is a heart in perfect unison with his time and country; the effusions of his heart and genius are instinctively propagated; they fertilize the moral, as well as the mental soil of humanity; they reappear with different forms, and become renovated, popularized and re-published, in more propitious ages,—by novel methods, but with fresh love and enthusiasm. In this respect, Dante, stands indisputably, the most pre-eminent among poets, ancient and modern. He represents, as it has been seen, a very great people. He inhabited a higher sphere of thought, and further, his characteristic genius and greatness are to have inhabited every region of thought. He stood, lofty, in his mediæval times, and has remained like a Pharos for the future ages of Italy. No one, we believe, will raise a voice to contradict Mr. Ruskin, who, in his "Stones of Venice," has awarded an exclusive pre-eminence to the Florentine poet; "I think," says Mr. Ruskin, "that the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral and

intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante."

We have briefly spoken of the state of Florence during the twelfth century. Towards the first year of that age, three brothers of noble blood, were living in that city. One of them, Cacciaguida, married Aldigeria, of the family of the Aldigieri, then one of the most powerful at Ferrara, his descendants took the name of Aldigeri—Alaghieri, Allighieri, and Alighieri, the family names being subject to constant changes in those days. This Cacciaguida, followed the emperor Conrad, in his crusade, and died in 1147, during the expedition. A son of his, the first who finally adopted the name of Alighieri, was living in 1189, and had a son who became the father of seven children, one of whom was also called Alighieri. This second Alighieri was a judge or jurisconsult; he had a son named Francis, by a first wife, and after his widowhood he married Donna Bella, by whom he had another son, who was christened at the church of St. John, and received the name of Durante, by abbreviation, Dante. One of those dreams often created by popular imagination when a man has attained an eminent degree of glory, has received universal credence in Italy, and is related by Boccacio; it is therefore entitled to a certain degree of respect. It seems that Donna Bella when pregnant, fell one day into a deep sleep; she dreamt she was lying upon a green meadow, by the side of a limpid fountain, under a laurel tree, extending far around its branches; in her dream, she gave birth to a son, who fed on the berries of the tree and drank of the water of the fountain; soon

after the child was metamorphosed into a shepherd, and endeavouring to grasp the leaves of the laurel, fell down, and in rising, he had become a peacock, at the sight of which, the mother became so agitated by her amazement that she awoke. Dante was born in 1265. All his family belonged to the Guelfic party and were mixed in the civil discords. They were twice exiled, the first time in 1248, and subsequently in 1260, after the great defeat of the Guelfs at Monte-Aperti, for seven years. Donna Bella had followed her husband in exile, but gave birth to our poet at Florence. She had afterwards a daughter whose name has never been mentioned; but who, it is well ascertained, married a Florentine, named Poggi and had a son called Andrea, with whom Boccacio became intimate, and from whose lips he could hear various details of the life of Dante.

Little is known about the childhood of the poet, excepting that Brunetto Latini took charge of his education. The master was an eminent personage of his time, and before him we must pause. Brunetto Latini was also of a noble Florentine family—a zealous Guelf, and had been ambassador of the municipality, the *Comune* of Florence, to the court of Alphonso of Castille, when the Guelfs were driven out of the city, after the disaster of Monte Aperti; he spent the years of his exile in France and in Paris. He had been *dettatore*, an office somewhat similar to that of secretary of the republic. On his return from exile in 1284, he was appointed *sindico*, a function not well defined, entrusting it seems, special administrative duties. He died in 1294. His two principal works are, "Il Tesoretto," written in Italian, and the "Tresor"

written in the *langue d'oil*, the French language of the north of France. Tiraboschi considers the first as an abridgment of the second, as the title might lead to suppose, and he has been followed by Quadrio and other Italian critics. Ginguené establishes their independence from each other; nevertheless, they certainly exhibit a similarity of erudition and method. The former is a valuable specimen for the student of Italian philology; its versification is generally flowing, and its occasional obscurity and asperities arose from the difficulty of treating serious subjects in rhymed verses, and in that rude age. It has often been said that Dante took from Brunetto Latini the idea of his "Divina Commedia," because the author of the "Tesoretto" describes also his vision,—his losing himself in a forest—vices and virtues, as well as fantastical localities; but if so—and it is very doubtful—it may be compared to a feeble light spark, kindling a magnificent, awful conflagration. Brunetto relates having lost his way in a forest, where he found *Nature*, who spoke to him of God—of man,—of the redemption—of the human soul—of the five senses—of the various complexions of man,—of the elements,—of the planets —of the variety of animals, and of navigation beyond Spain. Nature, before leaving the travelling poet, commands him to explore the neighbouring forest, where he will behold philosophy—the four virtues, the God of love, and, if he likes, fortune and fraud. The passage has one or two close imitations of Ovid. The traveller meets the four virtues, surrounded by twenty ladies; he only mentions four of these ladies, whom he loves more especially *(coralmente)*: they are *Courtesy*,

Liberality, *Loyalty* and *Valour*; he describes the exhortations and precepts he receives from them, and when he attains the abode inhabited by Love, Brunetto meets Ovid, who gives him many explanations on the subject of love, and enables him to find his way out. This may possibly have given Dante the idea of the company of Virgil in his Inferno. Brunetto, afterwards goes to a convent to confess his sins; and at the close of the 21st chapter of the *Tesoretto*, he curses the great sinners—obtains absolution, and declares that he does not care to go and visit Fortune. In the 22nd,—he returns to the forest, sees the world, the four elements, asks questions of Ptolemeus who replies in prose, and this reply has been lost. It is supposed that this poem of Brunetto Latini was composed in Paris; it is dedicated with eulogiums to the great king, Saint Louis. It is probable that the merit of its author did not escape the penetration of the king, for, he was admitted at court; he fequented the library of the *Sainte-chapelle*, and may have been requested by the king to write in the *langue d'oil* the work entitled the *Tresor*, of which no less than twelve manuscript copies are to be found in Paris.

The *Tresor* is a sort of Encyclopedia, or universal dictionary; it treats of sacred, profane, and natural history, of geography, astronomy, the science of government; its sources are from Aristotle, Plato, Terence, Sallust, Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Pliny, and Saint Bernard. It was one of the works the most usually read by Dante; and if *il Tesoretto* was the spark that lighted up his genius, the *Tresor* was one of the fundamental stores of his erudition, and without entering into

further details on the subject, let us see what were the studies then usual for young men, when they knew how to read and transcribe correctly the lessons dictated. These studies consisted of the *seven arts*, designated by the names of *trivium* and of *quadrivium*. In the first category, were comprised grammar, rhetoric and dialectics; in the second, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy; the sources of all are scattered in the works of Plato and Aristotle. With reference to the dialectics of that time, it was exclusively that of Aristotle; Count Balbo observes, that it was far from its original truth and purity,—consisting of what was known, through the medium of Porphyrus and Boetius—from translations and re-translations, undergoing commentaries, mutilations, and being applied to every thing during the seven centuries of scholasticism. It was, however, beheld in its original purity through Saint Thomas Aquinas, who during the latter years of his life had the various works of Aristotle translated from the Greek, and who simplified the faculties of reasoning. Dante was not acquainted with the latter improvement; still, when he was in Paris during his exile, he must have discovered the influence of Aquinas, and found a purer knowledge of the thoughts of Aristotle in the university of that city. Dante has proved that he was well acquainted with arithmetic and geometry, such as they were in his time. With respect to astronomy, he did not confine himself to poetical flights on the subject; he had devoted himself to the real knowledge of heaven, brooding in the highest contemplations, preparing to unravel the divine home of the blessed. The system

of astronomy of the time was that of Ptolomeus, which places the earth in the centre of the universe. Several Italian scholars have affirmed that the knowledge of Dante on the subject, far surpassed that of his contemporaries. As to music, it is difficult, to ascertain now, why it was placed between geometry and astronomy. All those distributions were ordered by the clergy, and were the result of the organizing spirit of the church. The object of music was no doubt, to induce young men to sing in the churches. Dante never ceased to manifest a deeply-felt admiration for music.

Besides the schools in which the seven arts were taught, others had been established for more than a century and a half, called *studi*, something like the Universities of our time. The first *studio* was founded at Bologna; it soon became distinguished for its law studies, but the popes and the emperors alternately claimed a supreme jurisdiction over it; and the *studio* was either protected or closed, subject to the political vicissitudes of parties, consequently, others were created at Padoua and Naples, Bologna becoming justly called *mater studiorum*. Towards 1280, it contained not less than 10,000 students of all nations. Private and public lectures were delivered; civil law, moral and natural philosophies were studied in its *studio*, as well as theology, although Paris was then the great theological school of the world. Dante, as stated, had early mastered the *Tresor*, that rich store of knowledge of his learned master.

Brunetto had initiated him to all the secrets of astronomy, when the republic claimed his services, and he found himself obliged to leave his beloved

pupil. The family of Dante sent him then to complete his studies at Bologna and at Padoua. Boccacio and all his Italian biographers, state that Dante in his youth was sent to Bologna and Padoua in order to find more abundant mental food. His studies were then especially directed towards moral and natural philosophy, as well as the *seven arts*. With reference to his knowledge of the ancient languages, it is evident that, although Latin was as familiar to him as the vernacular idiom, he did not know Greek. This fact has long been doubted, in consequence of an oversight, for, in his *Convito* he speaks of Aristotle, and of the impossibility in which he is, of forming his opinion on a certain point, as all the translations in his possession differ from each other.

The loss of his father in early life, was an irreparable misfortune. He lost in him the authority and tender control which would have softened his ardent imagination, and modified his passions. However, he was still living when Dante was nine years old, as he one day took him to a festival at the house of a rich neighbour, Portinari, who was living with his wife and a young daughter called *Beatrice*, or in the graceful Florentine abbreviation, *Bice*. She was also between eight and nine years old. The child, says Boccacio, was full of grace and nobleness. Her appearance kindled in the enthusiastic soul of the boy an ardent affection, almost nameless on earth. He has given an account of his youthful emotions, in his work entiled *Vita nuova*, which was composed in the vernacular idiom, when he was about twenty-two years old. This title of *Vita nuova* does not precisely mean *new life*, but *youthful life*

and rather we believe, *life of Initiation*. At the commencement of this book, he says that he was nine years old when the *glorious lady of his thoughts* appeared before him; she appeared brilliant with sweet and noble colours as became her age. At this moment, he continues, the vital spirit which dwells in the inmost core of the heart began to tremble in him, so passionately, that he felt violent pulsations in the smallest veins, and it seemed to say: "Here is a deity more potent than myself, coming to exercise its domination over my heart." From than day, he adds, love became the master of his soul. The beloved image never left him; he sought every opportunity of beholding her features; "they were," he says, "so sweet, that one could have applied to her the words of Homer; "She does not appear to me to be the daughter of a mortal but of a God;" and her presence was so beneficent that it never permitted his human nature to escape the control of reason.

From that day, Beatrice became for Dante, a type of perfection—a heavenly being, towards whom he must elevate himself by the continued efforts of the will, in shaking off the dust of earthly vicious affections. When, still a child, a secret voice often seemed to urge him to gaze on the neighbouring house where the graceful little lady was dwelling; he always returned better from his visit. Later, when he had reached the age of full-grown passion—in the midst of the reckless youths—associated to their lawless excesses, it was enough for him to have perceived at a distance only, the pious form of his beloved—to have followed her with his lingering gaze of love—he at once recovered the energy of virtue and became

powerless for evil. In his dreams he beheld her radiant. When, in reality, he beheld her surrounded by her companions, she appeared to him an immortal being, descended among earthly women to honour their weakness and protect their virtue; or, says Ozanam, if she were kneeling at the foot of the altar, he believed in her holy mediation for the sinners; he felt intuitively prayer flowing fervently from his lips. But when, on her return home, waiting for her on the way, he received from her the kindly salutation, (*Salute*) of Christian brotherhood; then, a sudden flame of charity kindled in him; it made him pardon his enemies; and; when she was near bowing to him, a spirit of love annihilated for a moment, his whole being. Afterwards, adds the Poet, at the moment when this noble lady inclined her head towards him, nothing could veil the dazzling light which inundated his eyes; he became overpowered by an overflowing beatitude. This salutation alone was the ultimate end of all his wishes; in this alone, dwelt all his happiness, but a happiness which overflowed the faculties of his soul. Dante was so earnest in his enthusiasm, that he conceived it to be shared by all his contemporaries: he says, that when the noble lady was crossing the streets of the city, people hastened to see her pass, which gave him surpassing joy, and that those whom she approached felt so impressed, that they dared not raise their eyes, whilst she, enveloped in her humility as in a veil, went on, without appearing cognizant of what was done or said in the crowd; and when she had passed, many exclaimed: "She is not a woman, but one of the most beautiful angels of heaven!" "She is a marvel," replied others,

" blessed be the God who creates such admirable works!"

Such were his sentiments,—such was the beauty which appeared to him in its reality, and which became the ideal that absorbed his imagination, until it dilated and expanded at a further period of his life. Such was the internal harmony of love which inspired, no doubt, his immortal poetical strains. Beatrice has been a favourite subject of capricious investigations by commentators, whose fables and aberrations are inadmissible. The most respectable authorities agree that she has a double character, real in the life of the poet, figurative in the fable of the poem. She represents the influence of women in Christian society. By Christianity, woman was raised from an abject state; she became admitted to all civil liberties; her influence was exercised over general manners; she took her share in the education of the family, and became the earthly providence of the home. Holy magistracies of charity were entrusted to her; she was invested with a personal dignity and a social rank, unknown before. Since the Christian era, women have had their share in all social movements; many suffered martyrdom for their religion; the mother of Constantine, Helen, raised the cross over the ruins of Jerusalem. Clovis at the battle of Tolbiac, invoked the god of Clothilda. Women took part in many of the ecclesiatical organizations. Saint Louis, was trained and ruled by the wisdom of his mother Blanche. The greatest of the minne singers, Vogelweide, became in Germany the echo and the expression of the initiating and purifying influence of woman. Joan of Arc saved

France; and Petrarch, was to appear on the horizon, soon after Dante, and continue the hallowed ideal, with his beloved and respected Laura.

But to return to the first impression received by Dante, when he beheld Beatrice. Affections cannot be ennobled without the mental and moral elevation. Ideas expand with the ineffable growth of tenderness. The charm which absorbed his being, did not retain him in a blind, inactive captivity. The thoughts of *her*, illuminated—encouraged his studies; he received from her sweet image the inspirations which animated the learned lessons of Brunetto. We have said that he was about ten years old when he beheld her for the first time; from that day, his boyish soul was devoted to the soul of the little fairy. He incessantly endeavours to see her; he sometimes succeeds, but without approaching, without speaking. It was only nine years after, that he meets her in public—it seems in a street—or some public place, she was dressed in white, and stood between two ladies older than herself; it was then that she bowed to him for the first time, with exquisite grace; it was then that he felt that he was a poet. It was the ninth hour of the day. For the first time his ears heard words spoken by the young lady. He withdrew in a delirium of felicity, and commenced his first poetical effusion:—a sonnet relating his emotions and inviting the public to reply. This sonnet became public, without any knowledge of the name of the youthful author. A great number of replies were circulated; amongst them—one, a scornful one, by another Dante (Dante di Majano) then a poet of some repute

but soon after buried in oblivion,—and another by Guido Cavalcanti, one of the most distinguished poets of the age, who, hearing later the name of the author, sought his acquaintance, and from that moment conceived for him a warm affection which never ceased during his life, despite all the political and social vicissitudes.

This sonnet of Dante—preceded by a narrative of his *vision*—excited the admiration, along with the curiosity, of all talented people in Tuscany. The young poet's health became affected, it is supposed, by over excited imagination. In short, the name of the author did not remain long concealed, and now the public yearning longed to know who was the object of such an enthusiasm. Dante, it seems, made use of a subterfuge to conceal the real object of his homage: he addressed several sonnets to another lady, and another on her departure from Florence, which was considered superior to all; from this day, he was called THE POET. It was followed by several other poetical compositions, in all of which are found allusions to Beatrice, and all the little episodes of his love. But one day Beatrice, probably deceived by appearances and piqued by his offering his homage to another, refused him the usual salutation. And let us observe here that in Italian the word *salute*, signifies at the same time, bodily *health*, *salvation* of the soul, and *salutation;* in the *Vita nuova* especially, the word has this triple signification; Beatrice refuses him *health*, *salvation* and *salutation;* in this instance, as well as in many others, Dante gives a very extensive acceptation to the word *salute*, comprising the positive and the figurative. The idea of this

double sense was probably in imitation of Aristotle who only speaks of the *health* of the body to elevate himself to the *salvation* of the soul. It is not easily discovered when, or how ceased this coolness, between the two ideal lovers. He thinks this refusal of the salutation is the penalty deserved by his subterfuge concealing the real object of his homage. A great gloom appears in his miscellaneous verses of this period; and some confusion exists about its cause. He does not state clearly that he was threatened with seeing Beatrice given in marriage to the son of a friend of his father. Elsewhere he alludes to the sorrow he experiences after her marriage. He relates that he was invited to a wedding; among the invited married ladies, he recognizes Beatrice; she had become the wife of a knight, Simon de'Bardi, in 1287. At the sight of her, he trembles with agitation; he flies from the world and composes new verses full of sweetness and tenderness, relating his visions, celebrating the grace and loveliness of Beatrice, as well as the charms of the ladies who accompany her, and who receive from her their purest fascination. Such transports, however, were alloyed by sad presentiments, which were soon to be justified. Beatrice died the 9th day of June, 1290. How could the grief of the poet be described? In the sorrowful and delirious confusion of his thoughts, he wrote to all the princes of the universe to inform them of this death, as of a gloomy foreboding which threatened the future of the world, his tears being inexhaustible. However, when time had partially banished the dark remembrance of death and of the grave, the earthly being whom he had loved

so deeply, revived in his memory, radiant, immortal—her ascendancy and loveliness, greater than ever ; she lived a second time for him, and revived his genius and inspirations. His thoughts followed her soul in the invisible world, where she now dwelt ; he adorned her with all the flowers of immortality, placed her on the highest step of the throne of God, and the remembrance of her earthly death vanished as he hailed her in this glorious transfiguration.

The whole real history of the love of the poet, is consigned as stated, in the *Vita nuova*. It contains all the little poems he had composed for Beatrice, which he connected together by historical annotations, in which he related all he could remember of the impressions and motives which accompanied their composition, adding to this a kind of historical analysis of each piece. These annotations, as commentaries, are also very poetical, and only differ in the nature of the versification. They breathe the same tone, the same exalted imagination ; they offer the same poetical forms; and in the portion of them in prose, in which he announces what he is going to say, he is no less adorned or figurative. Its originality dwells especially in the singular individualism of the poetical biography; and, it might be considered as the result of an accidental, transient, effervescence of imagination, if Dante had not more than once, in the course of mature age, found the opportunity of alluding to this production of his youth in the view to explain, confirm, and eulogize its contents. The *Vita nuova* contains also, many subtle speculations; he explains in it, his belief that the number *nine* had a great part in the life of Beatrice : he saw her

first at the ninth hour; she died on a ninth of a month, at the ninth hour of the day; he then refers to the nine heavens of Ptolomeus, which must therefore have presided over her birth, and adds, that she was herself the number *nine*, because *three* being the root of nine, and forming the holy *triad*, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, it is the source of all prodigies. Beatrice, under the influence of the number three, signifies that she was a *nine*,—namely a prodigy of which the *triad* is the origin and root. The *Vita nuova* is an opuscule of scarcely a hundred pages, but forms, it may be seen, an introduction to the life and genius of the poet. The scenes it relates, extend to the anniversary of the death of Beatrice; its last sonnet is perhaps the most enthusiastic in its expression of admiration, and it concludes by saying:—"After having finished the sonnet, an admirable vision appeared to me, in which I beheld a spectacle which decides me not to speak any more of this blessed woman, so long as I shall be unable to discourse on her graces more worthily; I endeavour to attain this object, as she knows it herself. In future, if such is the pleasure of Him by whom all things live, to let my life continue sometime, I hope to say of this blessed woman what has never been said of any person; afterwards, let it please the Lord of all goodness, that my soul may go and behold the glory of the beloved, namely, of this blessed Beatrice, who is contemplating gloriously HIM who is blessed in all ages."

Our observations on the *Vita nuova* have obliged us to anticipate several events and impressions of Dante. When he was seventeen years old, he must have heard the report of the terrible

patriotic vengeance of the Sicilian vespers. He had already witnessed in Florence the deplorable consequences of civil wars. The Ghibellins had returned in 1273 ; being expelled in 1275—they came again in 1279, and obtained a small share in the government, as it has been explained. The Guelfs kept the ascendancy, and in 1282, its *popolo* delegated its authority to its Priors. The *Guelfic popolano* kept the reins of government, with very little variety, during the life of Dante. In the meantime although known as *The Poet*, he was not satisfied with this fruitless illustration ; he was thinking, at the instigation of his family, of taking also a share in the affairs of the government. The family was in affluent circumstances ; he had had the means to study at Bologna and Padoua. Dante had some landed property near Piacenza, and he tells us himself, that he was proprietor of very costly furniture ; he felt therefore, independent, and entitled to remain free, to indulge in the cultivation of the learning he had acquired, and still more, in the fond reminiscence of his love, which often awoke in him a world of sorrows. His life was thus desultory ; it was about this time, it appears, that he commenced a Latin poem with the intention to entitle it Hell. His friends, however, were anxious that he should take an interest in the political affairs of his party ; and the poet gradually entered political life, and was induced to appear on the public square and struggle sword in hand. But, in order to understand fully his position and impressions, in the midst of many tumultuous events, we must speak briefly of an interesting episode which abounds in characteristic peculiarities of

the moral and political state of Italy at this period.

Florence and a part of Tuscany were entirely Guelfic. Pisa although Ghibelline in principles, was in reality a democratical republic like the other principal cities of Tuscany. She had forced all the feudal lords of her territory to submit, and to live like plain citizens, like the popolani, without any other power but that which they held from the city. Several of those feudal families remained secretly and fiercely hostile to the government, and watched incessantly the moment favourable to overthrow it. The two most powerful among them were those of the Visconti and of the Gherardeschi, both attached to the Guelfic faction, merely because it was the faction hostile to that of the people. In 1274, this Guelfic faction having given greater umbrage than usual to the republic, was expelled from Pisa and along with it, its chiefs, the Gherardeschis and the Viscontis. All these exiled Guelfs joined those of Tuscany, and waged a regular war against their fellow-citizens; they were at first commanded by Giovanni de' Visconti and afterwards by Ugolino de' Gherardeschi, who is the Ugolino of Dante's Inferno. The citizens of Pisa were defeated several times; several of their fortresses were taken from them, and a large portion of their territory was ravaged; they were obliged to sue for peace, and to receive within their walls the banished Guelfs now strengthened by their victories. Count Ugolino became the most influential personage of Pisa. He was devoured by the most boundless ambition,—in possession of all the vices—all the brutality of his age and caste, with-

out the gleams of magnanimity and genius, which, however transient, often shed a bright effulgence on both. He formed the project of taking possession of the sovereignty of the city.

Ugolino was elected Captain of the people, when the war broke out between Genoa and Pisa. It was not for some time marked by either great success or reverse on either side, till this war terminated by the celebrated naval battle of Meloria, in which the Pisans lost 4,000 killed, 12,000 prisoners—the *élite* of their population—a defeat which may be called a mortal blow, from which they never recovered. Ugolino escaped from the disaster without having given any proof of his bravery, and however unpopular he might be, the discontented city, in her consternation, did not think of changing her Captain of the people; his succession, moreover, under such circumstances, could not be very enviable. Pisa stood in the most alarming position: a general league of Genoa with the Guelfic cities, threatened her destruction. Ugolino, at this critical moment displayed great skill and presence of mind, more actuated evidently by personal interest than by any patriotic feeling. He saw the necessity of dissolving that formidable league at any price. With great address, sparing neither money nor sacrifices, he succeeded in gaining over the Guelfs of Tuscany, especially the Florentines. He gave up to them several of the best Pisan fortresses, and engaged himself to expel the Ghibellin party and to govern in future the republic of Pisa in the Guelfic and Florentine interests. Ugolino having thus obtained peace and fulfilled his engagements, being delivered of the Ghibellin party—he

conceived that he could easily attain the object of his ambition, the absolute sovereignty. But he found opponents in his own family, in the first instance, his own nephew, Count Anselmo di Caprasa, a young noble highly gifted and very much beloved; Ugolino had him poisoned. This opponent being dead, another still more formidable, stood up in the person of Nino, Lord of Gallura, in Sardinia, and Ugolino's own grandson. This young Nino, equally ambitious, and endowed with extraordinary physical powers and bravery, became openly the rival of his grandfather in the ambitious pretension to an absolute sovereignty over the city.

The Guelfs of Pisa, being divided between the two pretenders, during four entire years, from 1284 to 1288, the city remained the constant scene of collision and bloodshed between the grandfather and the grandson. In the meantime, whilst the Guelfic party was thus weakening itself, the Ghibellins rose from their prostration; they rallied round Ruggieri, Archbishop of Pisa, a man equally ambitious, skilful and worldly, who alternately favoured the grandfather and the grandson, in the hope of annihilating both; although the details of this struggle are little known, our limits oblige us to pass over them rapidly, which will suffice for our object. Nino and Ugolino, after such a long and fierce hostility, with equal powers and means, without any decisive result, both wearied with the struggle—whether feignedly or in reality will ever remain a doubt—both abdicated their pretensions and returned to private life. But they soon after repented having taken such a resolution; they regretted the

power they had lost, however limited, with all its thorn and storms; they met, a reconciliation took place, and they agreed to recover together the sovereignty of Pisa and keep an equal share in it. They easily succeeded in the execution of the plot, and they placed themselves at the head of government. Ugolino, however, was not a man who could long tolerate a partner in authority, his grandson more than any body else. He treated secretly with Ruggieri; these two agreed that Ugolino would withdraw in one of his castles and the archbishop in the meantime would excite the people and the Ghibellins against Nino. The conspiracy met with a complete success. The grandson thus abandoned could not resist alone: he fled, to escape the tragical end which no doubt awaited him; as soon as Ugolino was informed of his flight, he returned to Pisa in triumph, and proved himself, anxious to celebrate the event with splendour. He assembled all his family, relations and partisans to a magnificent banquet; the local traditions relate that the gorgeous feast was clouded over by some sinister words of a juggler, or one of those buffoons, who were then found in all courts and castles:—Ugolino asking the fellow, it seems, what he thought of such a feast and of the man who *could* give it,—he replied; "I think that this man is the very one in Italy who is nearest some awful reverse."

His prediction soon became realized. Ruggieri had conspired with Ugolino to ruin his grandson, but as soon as he felt himself sufficiently powerful, the archbishop prepared to attack openly the old traitor. He assailed suddenly Ugolino at the head of the people of Pisa, and of the whole Ghibelline

party; the Count not being quite unprepared, a long and sanguinary struggle ensued, in which he lost a natural son and a nephew; killed in defending the palace stormed by the people. Ugolino abandoned and defeated, was taken prisoner, (July 1288) with two of his sons and two of his grandsons; they were all confined together in the higher part of a strong tower, within the city, situated on a square then called of the *Anziani* and afterwards of the *Cavalieri*. The triumph of Ruggieri, roused the Florentines and other Guelfs of Tuscany who had a powerful interest in supporting the cause of Ugolino against the Ghibellins of Pisa. They therefore declared war against the city, which again found itself in a desperate position. In this crisis, the citizens called to the government of the city a commander capable to extricate them from such threatening difficulties; they selected Guido Montefeltro, whom we shall meet in one of the valleys of the eighth circle of the Inferno. He arrived at Pisa in March, 1289, when Ugolino, with his four sons and grandsons, had been eight months in the prison mentioned, without any thing decisive having been thought of on their fate. Roncioni has cleared proved that Ruggieri did not deserve alone the hatred of Ugolino, manifested with so much atrocity in the "Inferno." It was not him alone, as it is generally related, but all the members of the council (*tutti i Senatori*) who condemned their fallen foe to die from starvation, with his sons and nephews, after a long and cruel imprisonment. There is every probability that the arrival of Montefeltro instilled into the enemies of the prisoners a degree

of exultation and of greater thirst of vengeance, which induced them suddenly to take the horrible resolution of throwing the keys of the tower into the Arno, without leaving food for the prisoners. They must evidently have previously informed the wretched old man of their ferocious project, since the chronicles and traditions of the time state that they refused any nourishment, and to this denial added another, more awful still,—because it evinced a depth of hatred, rarely met with, excepting perhaps in the Spanish traditions of the days of Calderon. Ugolino, fully aware that death was inevitable, feeling his conscience tormented by the remembrance of his crimes, begged imploringly to his last moment for a priest or a monk, to confess himself. He cried in vain! all remained deaf. It was only on the seventh or eighth day after, that the dismal tower was broken open, in order to withdraw the five bodies; they were cast away together, and contemptuously, in the same grave. The lower half of an old square tower may at this day be seen at Pisa; it is all that remains of the celebrated tower of Hunger, in which took place the episode of Dante's "Inferno," one of the most popular in poetry, and the longest in the whole poem, for, it occupies more than a hundred lines. But the poet does not mention the events which we have just related; they belong to history; they were known to every one. And Ugolino meeting Dante in hell, recognizes him to be a Tuscan by his accent, does not enter, therefore, into a superfluous narrative, and the portion of his adventures which he relates, is that which no human being could know—viz:—all that had taken place in the

awful dark tower, and which had been witnessed only by the Almighty. The only circumstance of his death, which must have been known to many Pisans, and which the poet might have mentioned, is the fact of his clamorous, fainting prayers for a confessor. But Dante says nothing of it; his fixed purpose was to place Ugolino in hell—and it would have been inconsistent as well as anomalous to dwell on his repentance and remorses. Another point on which Dante does not adhere to historical truth, and purposely, it is his stating no distinction between the four companions of the sufferings of Ugolino;—he supposes them all his children, and all very young—whilst two only were his sons, in the full maturity of age, and the two others his grandsons, who must have been from ten to twelve, years old. This poetical licence of the Poet, enables him to give a free course to the pathetic strains of his genius. The pity—anguish, tenderness of the father are deeper; the gentleness, self-denial, and sufferings of the children, more affecting. His genius proves itself truly sublime, in leaving the physical, material portion of the episode in the back ground, in order to dwell especially on the development of its moral beauty.

We must follow the historical events in which Dante participated more or less, and form an acquaintance with the personages whom he introduced in his great epic. Charles of Anjou, the conqueror of Naples and murderer of Conradin of Höhenstauffen, died in 1285. His son and successor Charles II., was then prisoner of the King of Arragon; he recovered his liberty through negociations, passed through Paris on his return, and

entered Florence in May, 1289; he was accompanied by his eldest son Charles Martel, who subsequently inherited the crown of Hungary through his mother, but who was prevented by death from succeeding to the throne of his father. Charles Martel did not remain long in Florence; the Poet was presented to him, and received from him many marks of esteem; a mutual sympathy arose between him and the prince, which became a warm and lasting affection, during the subsequent embassies of Dante at Naples. But it was reported that the Ghibellins of Arezzo had threatened to arrest Charles II. on his way to Naples. The Florentines gave him an escort of eight hundred horse and three thousand foot soldiers. It is positive that Dante was among them, then commencing the active life of an Italian citizen. Arezzo, as well as the rest of Tuscany, had been Guelfic till 1287, when the influence of her bishop gave the ascendency to the Ghibellins and obtained the election of Buon Conte de Montefeltro, as *capitano*. He was son of the Guido de Montefeltro, whom we have seen Podesta at Pisa. The Florentines accepted the alliance of Bologna, Lucca, and Pistoia, each of which sent a succour of two hundred horses: thus strengthened, they deliberated and decided to march onwards. They advanced in the Casentino, a mountainous district of Arezzo, in the upper Val d' Arno, and met the enemy at Campaldino. The army of the Florentines had twelve thousand foot soldiers and two thousand cavalry. The army of Arezzo did not exceed eight thousand foot and nine hundred cavalry soldiers; nevertheless, the latter bravely asked to give battle. Its cavalry charged first;

and with so much impetuosity, that they broke the line of the Florentine cavalry, the latter yielded and fled, in order to reform themselves under the protection of their infantry advancing to their assistance.

This first advantage was fatal to the army of Arezzo; emboldened by the flight of the Florentines, they pursued them with so much impetuosity and rashness, that its cavalry soon found itself completely isolated, at an immense distance from its infantry, whilst the Florentine cavalry, on the contrary, rallying with its infantry, fell with their whole forces, first on the Arezzo cavalry, which they routed, and afterwards turned on the infantry and crushed it; the loss of the vanquished was about three thousand killed and two thousand prisoners. This battle of Campaldino was fought on the 11th of June, 1289. The Bishops (or Archbishops) of Arezzo and Montefeltro, perished in it; a peculiar circumstance respecting the latter, who was a celebrated warrior, was that his body, after having been long sought for among the dead, could not be found; this singularity caused great sensation at the time, and many conjectures were naturally formed on this disappearance, which to many, seemed a prodigy. We have explained the custom of the republican armies of that period to select a certain number of warriors, —*feditori*—who were the first to attack and dart on the hostile army. This custom was followed at Campaldino. The celebrated Vieri dé'Cerchi, who commanded the Florentine cavalry, had the privilege of appointing the twelve warriors who were to engage the combat; he most unexpectedly named himself, although wounded—then his

son—and as a third, his nephew, selecting no one else, in order to leave every citizen at liberty to manifest his love for his country. More than one hundred and fifty immediately offered themselves and charged the enemy. Dante was no doubt among them. Leonardo d'Arezzo, quotes a letter received from Dante, dated 1300, in which he describes the battle. This letter, then under his eyes, has unfortunately been lost since; it gives a minute description of its various phases; according to Leonardo, the poet fought on horseback, in the first line, and was exposed to great danger; he cites his own words, expressive of his emotions; viz.: "*Ebbi temenza molta,*" in consequence of which some of the commentators have concluded that Dante had actually been seized with a panic and have compared him to Horace and his "*Relictâ non bene parmulâ.*" Nothing could be more groundless and unjustifiable. His whole life is a perpetual display of fearlessness; and, he evidently alludes to the fear of losing the battle which must have filled him with bitterness when the Florentine cavalry fled.

We have now Dante, therefore, fairly launched into the duties and agitations of a citizen of Florence. One of his commentators, Buti, who was writing sixty years after the poet's death, mentions that it was about this period, that he thought of entering a monastery,—or actually took the dress of the Franciscans, which he quitted before pronouncing any vows. But other commentators place the circumstance several years before,—which is by far the most probable,—and mention a monastery of Benedictins in the Apennines, as one in which he had resolved to

retire from the world. Other Italian biographers do not mention the circumstance at all; still, from the testimonies existing, there is abundant reason to believe that Dante at some period of his early life thought of becoming a monk. There were many moments in his life when his thoughts might turn to the calm obscurity of the cloister as to the highest happiness allotted to man on earth. However, he certainly cannot have entertained the idea long, and instead of a monastic life, he selected a most stormy career. We have seen its commencement at the battle of Campaldino. Many sorrows awaited Dante, on his return to Florence after that memorable day. He for some time suffered acutely from an infirmity; scarcely cured, he shared with Beatrice her grief at the loss of her father Portinari; lastly, he was as deeply heart-stricken as he could be, when Beatrice herself died, on the 9th June, 1290. For several months, he gave way to his tears and sorrow. The first explosion of his misery being assuaged, he exhaled his bereavement in a variety of canzoni and sonnets; but, all this seeming to him too trivial for such a divine subject, he addressed, as already stated, a letter in Latin to all the kings and princes of the earth, to depict to them the desolation in which the death of Beatrice had just plunged Florence and the whole world, commencing with the words of Jeremiah: "*Quomodo sedet sola civitas pleno populo*, &c." Nothing could be too solemn to render his impressions. After all those effusions—the intensity of the poet's sorrow followed the laws of nature; it gradually relaxed. He found in study an effective refuge. He directed his attention to graver

subjects—to philosophy and the sciences; he frequented all the localities where he could hear learned discussions and scientific lectures, which must have been in the convents, the whole learning of the period being almost confined to the monks; even the lay-professors gave their lectures in the cloisters. Besides these consolations, Dante subsequently, found others of a more delicate nature. He did not forget Beatrice; it was impossible. We repeat it, she ever remained the dearest, purest, loftiest object of his thoughts; still, it is evident that, at a later period, other thoughts of the same nature, of however inferior a degree, were not excluded. He was known to admire, and love—in imagination at least—a beautiful young lady, whom he had seen in the society of Beatrice,—and he admired others afterwards, in honour of whom he composed also many canzoni.

However, despite these romantic incidents, the precise date of which has not been ascertained, we come to the period when Dante married. Boccaccio affirms that his parents and *consorti*, seeing him in a deplorable state of gloom and consumption, observing that life seemed a burden to him, they pressed him to marry. He yielded to their entreaties. It was in 1292 that he wedded Gemma, daughter of Manetto de'Donati, member of that most distinguished family,—the Donatis, whose chief, Corso Donati, soon after appeared most conspicuously in the civil agitations of the republic, and at the head of a faction opposed to that of Dante. Several writers have represented Gemma as a cause of domestic bitterness to the poet. The fact seems only founded on some humorous

observations of Boccaccio, respecting the fate of men who marry. Nothing seems to corroborate the assertion. No doubt, his habits of contemplation and of metaphysical felicity, did not allow much room for what is usually understood by domestic happiness, nevertheless, we shall see occasions, on which Gemma proved herself an affectionate, devoted, faithful wife. Dante has never mentioned her, and his silence was in accordance with the manners of the age; he might moreover, have felt a repugnance to associating an earthly, profane remembrance with his poetical ideal. When he left Florence in 1300, he left her there, with his seven children,—six boys, and a girl, called Beatrice—and, if during his long exile, she continues at Florence, and never saw her husband again, it will be seen that it was in accordance with his wishes, and that it was important for the hopes of the exiled for an ultimate return to his fatherland, that his wife and some of his children should remain in the city and occupy his own house. The six or seven first cantos of the Inferno, were certainly composed during the first years of his marriage, but, very different from what they became afterwards—when they had been amended and perfected with the utmost care. Dante's life at this period, was divided between his poetical labours, and the public functions entrusted to him by the republic. The violence of political parties, did not alone agitate his existence; family feuds added a world of bitterness. If he experienced great delight in becoming allied to the Donatis, of a nobility superior to his own, and thus forming one of the *consorti* of the haughty Corso Donati,

the proud soul of the poet could little brook his pride and insolence. Dante on the other hand, became tenderly attached to Piccarda, sister of Corso Donati, and to his brother Forese, whom we shall see again, subsequently. The haughty Corso, had married a sister of Vieri dé'Cerchi, whose mortal foe he became afterwards; he had also vowed an implacable hatred to Guido Cavalcanti, the *first friend* of Dante. The latter did not hesitate to sacrifice his own interest and family ties; he remained faithful to friendship. Thus Gemma became the very innocent cause of many of the disappointments, sorrows and misfortunes which, after her marriage, befell the poet.

CHAPTER III.

Historical events introduced by Dante in his poem.—Episode of Francesca of Rimini.—Account of it given by Boccaccio.—Historical facts on the subject.—The subject as treated by Dante.—Dante forms part of the body of the *Grandi*.—The laws of Giano della Bella.—His banishment.—State of Florence.—Macchiavelli.—Political position of Dante.—His matriculation in one of the Arts.—His importance in the republic.—His various embassies.—The *Taglia Guelfa*.—Civil dissensions at Pistoia.—The *Bianchi* and the *Neri*.—Their origin at Pistoia.—They appeal to Florence and form the factions of the Whites and Blacks in the republic.—Intervention of Boniface VIII.—Conduct of the Florentine government.—Sanguinary struggles in Florence.—Dante elected Prior.—Difficulties of his position.—His conduct and energetic measures.—The Jubilee of 1300.—Approach of Charles Valois.—Dante's mission to Rome.—Arrival of the French prince at Florence.—Its consequences.—His treachery.—Massacre and expulsion of the Whites.—Dante's house plundered and burnt.—His wife Gemma.—Decrees of accusation against Dante.—Feigned conspiracy against Charles de Valois.—His extortions and cruelty.—Dante is ruined and exiled.

We must pause at the year of Dante's marriage, 1292, and, previous to our following him in his political career, we must cast a retrospective glance on another historical episode, respecting which the popular imagination of the time indulged in the most fanciful additions and embellishments, in accordance with the taste of the age. We have seen that in 1288, the horrible death of Count Ugolino, was a subject of awful interest in the whole of Italy. A few months later, Dante, at the battle of Campaldino, may have seen struck down, Buon Conte di Montefeltro,

the general of the army of Arezzo —whose body could not be found afterwards—a singular adventure which furnishes the poet with the subject of one of the most magnificent narratives of the Purgatory ; and, shortly after the battle of Campaldino, the tragical end of Francesca took place at Rimini. Thus, within a few months from each other, happened the real tragical events,—which, fermenting in his genius, re-appeared at a later period, in his pictures of the other world. During the short campaign against the people of Arezzo, and, which terminated by the encounter on the plains of Campaldino, now picturesque and covered with vineyards, Dante, formed the acquaintance of Bernardino della Polenta, brother of Francesca of Ravenna, surnamed of Rimini, from its being the place of her death, and, a lasting friendship ensued. It is not improbable that the poet's friendship for the brother of the victim whom he has immortalized, made him still more deeply sensible to the misfortunes of the sister. The adventure of Francesca, became immediately a mysterious subject of curiosity and of conjectures among the people of Romagna ; it soon spread in the other parts of Italy, and a flight so rapid could not take place without the addition of many fabulous circumstances. Dante, in introducing this adventure in his poem, was at liberty to select, between the historical truth and the popular tradition along with its exaggerations. He preferred the latter as harmonizing perfectly with the ideal of poetry, and he, moreover, added to it, his own imaginative fictions. Consequently, the truthful, historical event, was doubly impaired.

The fabulous creations of both, the people and

the poet, tend naturally to enhance the romantic interest of the adventure and awake the deepest sympathy of the reader. But we have now to deal solely with the history of the heroine. Boccaccio collected most carefully all the details of the adventure in question, such as it was generally believed in his time; but, Boccaccio was decidedly inclined to follow and believe the narrative of the poet, as far as possible, in preference to adhering rigidly to the purer tradition; it is evidently with great reluctance that he admits of circumstances in the real fate of Francesca which derange the poetical story. He states that Francesca was daughter of Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, who had long been at war with the Malatestis, lords of Rimini. Peace being restored, both parties thought it expedient to form a family alliance with each other. It was agreed that Guido da Polenta would give in marriage to Gianciotto de'Malatesti, his only daughter, Francesca, who was young and of exquisite beauty. Guido being reminded by a friend that, as his daughter was proud, if she saw Gianciotto de'Malatesti before the marriage, no one could persuade her to accept him as a husband; it was suggested that it would be safer to send one of his brothers to espouse Francesca in his name. Her father, Guido, was anxious that Gianciotto should become his son-in-law, although he was lame and deformed, because he was renowned for his bravery, and it was presumed also that he would succeed his father in the sovereignty of Rimini. The suggestion was followed. Gianciotto's brother, Paul, a handsome, courteous and graceful youth came to Rimini to

be betrothed in his brother's name and place. Francesca on beholding him from one of the palace windows, he became the sole object of her thoughts and love. They were betrothed, and she went to Rimini, where, on the following morning only, after her arrival, she perceived the treachery worked upon her. Her wrath can easily be conceived, and she, by no means thought of banishing from her heart her love for Paul. Here, the narrative of Boccaccio becomes exceedingly discreet and reserved. He continues by stating that he never heard it said that Francesca had afterwards any more intimate communications with Paul; that he only knows what the poet says of it, that the fact is possible, but that he considers the words of Dante on the subject as a fiction, founded more on what *could* have happened, than upon any positive knowledge of the circumstance. However it may be, he adds, Gianciotto being gone to fill the office of podesta in some city, Paul and Francesca, brought together, saw each other freely, and without any fear; a devoted servant of the husband informed him of all, and engaged himself to let him be a witness of what he advanced. Gianciotto came secretly to Rimini a prey to rage and jealousy. The servant having watched for the favourable moment, brought him to Francesca's door, which he found closed. The husband knocked and called his wife. The couple within, recognized his voice. Paul, to hide himself, rushed into a trap, which opened on a lower room, whilst she went to open to Gianciotto. But Paul had remained caught by a hook; the former soon perceived him, and darted to pierce him; Francesca threw

herself between the two and received the mortal blow, her chest being traversed. Gianciotto, who loved his wife more than himself, and in despair at this accident, withdrew the weapon from the body, and killed his brother with it; he then returned immediately to his office of podesta, leaving the two dead bodies on the spot. They were buried the next day in the same grave.

Such is the substance of Boccaccio's narrative. His intention was evidently to soften the tragical story, as much as possible; all the other commentators of Dante are perhaps less romantic in their arrangements of this historical episode; nevertheless, they all, more or less, diverge from historical truth, on the essential points, as it has been proved since, by historians, from original documents, and especially by the diligent researches of Fauriel. For instance, there never was any war between Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, and Malatesta da Verrocchio, Lord of Rimini. Both belonged to the Guelfic party, and often had assisted each other in their respective expeditions. Guido, in 1276, expelled from Ravenna the Traversaras, chiefs of the Ghibellins, and was assisted on this occasion by Gioanni de'Malatesti, *il Sciancato*, otherwise called Gianciotto, and in gratitude for this service he gave him his only daughter, Francesca, in marriage. The elder brother of Gianciotto, Paul, surnamed the handsome, who was then married, negotiated this alliance for him. Paul had married in 1269, Orabile Malatesti, probably one of his cousins, who had long been a prisoner of the celebrated Guido de Montefeltro, for, the Malatesti had long waged war against him for her recovery. Orabile

was still living in 1276, and Paul, therefore, could not think of Francesca's hand for himself; from the period of the marriage of Gianciotto, 1276 to 1289, there is an interval of twelve years, during which, it seems that Francesca lived, according to all appearances, harmoniously with her husband. It is consequently evident that Paul and Francesca had never been destined to each other,—that, they could not have conceived for each other that sudden irresistible passion,—and that they had not been separated either by treachery or violence. Their passion must have arisen during the interval of the twelve years that lasted the union of Francesca with Gianciotto; it could not, therefore, be of that innocent nature as if they had been both youthful, free, and in the first exuberance of a tender and ardent disposition.

So far suffices to establish the difference between the historical facts and the popular version of them. Dante adopted the latter. His narrative is more properly a mere allusion—a lyrical reference to a fact. He passes rapidly over the historical portion of the adventure, supposing it to be known to all those whom he addresses; he fondly dwells on its mysterious and secret details, about which popular tradition has left nothing certain, remaining at liberty, therefore, to give a free course to his imagination, and to develop the *marvellous*—the unearthly—connecting link, with the fatal destinies of man in another life. His object, also, was to render in a dramatic form, the personal impressions which he had experienced from the adventure, adhering, not to the historical and accidental details, but

to the general ideas and manners of his time, adorning this simple adventure, or his idea of a tragical event, with the powerful and profound modifications of his reflective imagination. In the poem, Dante meets Francesca de Rimini, about whom he has heard so much on earth, and his remembrance is so vivid that he is moved to tears, thinking of a love so deep and so unfortunate. She does not tell him a word about her family—nor who she is—where she comes from; she does not mention her husband—does not even say if she is married. She speaks of a lover whom she does not name, but she does not say where or how she has known him. She describes their mutual passion, and merely adds that she has been killed with him by one who, at some future day, will be confined in the *Caïna*—portion of hell destined to those who have murdered their own relatives—thus vaguely alluding to the relationship of the murderer with the victims. She therefore says nothing of what she supposes to be known to the whole world, nor does Dante ask her any details on the subject; his curiosity bears on a more secret and delicate point, on a circumstance which can only be known to herself and her lover; he wishes to know what has been the fatal circumstance which, favouring their passion, led them to yield to its intensity, and thus plunged them into irreparable ruin. She replies and relates the consequences of herself and her friend reading together a passage of the romance of *Lancelot du Lac;* this latter portion of her narrative is the most affecting and the most epic. The influence of this romance is evidently also a fiction of the poet, for, if true, it could never have

been known; and it could not easily be a popular fiction. At that period, the romance of *Lancelot* was in reality already very celebrated in Italy; but they were the higher classes who read it, in *Provençal*, or in the *Langue d'oïl*—or perhaps in Latin, in which language it was then translated, but not in Italian. Thus, it must be a fiction of the poet, and the most novel, the most effective, the most pre-eminently lyrical, of the history of Francesca, in which poetical truth soars far above historical truth, intermingled, at the same time, as it is, with his own impressions and reflections.

But let us return to the political life of Dante. We have alluded, with reference to the constitution of Florence—to the revolutionary extremes which convulsed the republic. We have mentioned the violent popular movement against the oppressed nobles, who were, as Count Balbo observes, oppressed in public and oppressors in private. The people, conducted by Giano della Bella, modified the government, as it has been seen, by adding the authority of the Gonfalonier of justice with his thousand guards ready to obey him any where and in any way; and with his *Ordini della giustizia*, against any of the great or noble, along with his *consorto* or ally, who might outrage the *popolani*. It was declared that any family that had reckoned a knight among its members would be considered as forming part of the body of *Grandi*. Thus, Dante became legally one of the *great* of the state. The violence and iniquity of such measures were defeating their object; in endeavouring to humiliate the nobles, they were augmenting their importance; by depriving them of any share in the governing

power, despite their merit, services and submission to the laws and customs of the land, they tended to enhance and strengthen their aristocratic existence. It will be seen what Dante thought of such exclusive laws, when banished himself from the *comune*, or municipal state. Let it not be forgotten that one of the common penalties for an injury to a *popolano* was the destruction of the palace of the family condemned, and that no witnesses were required in the accusations. Such an outrageous code did not satisfy the popular passions; Giano della Bella, who had called forth such laws against the nobility was banished by the people in 1295. His banishment was the natural result of his reckless attack on all abuses, along with the rigour and excesses of the laws promulgated under his auspices. He became the object of furious calumnies. He was assailed, betrayed, and threatened. He might, according to the customs of the age, have tried the fate of arms, but, adverse to commencing a civil war, he retired, and subsequently died in poverty and exile. Macchiavelli in his admirable Florentine Histories (*Storie Florentine*), has described the state of the city after the exile of Della Bella. According to his narrative, the nobles hoping to recover their dignities, immediately assembled, and sent a deputation to the *signoria* (governing body) begging them to soften the *acerbity* of the laws against them. The *popolani*, hearing this, flew to arms. The nobles, on the other hand, collected in three different localities and prepared to resist them. The people insisted that six of their number should be annexed to the *signoria* to govern with them and control them. In the mean time both parties

were preparing for a struggle; when a few Florentines on both sides, and many respected ecclesiastics, interfered to pacify them. After mutual reproaches and recriminations, fully detailed by Macchiavelli, the voice of moderation succeeded, and after many discussions and threats, the concession which was obtained from the popular party, in order to appease their oppressed foes, merely required that it would be necessary, for the future, to produce witnesses in the accusations brought against the nobles.

Dante, in his quality of *great* must have been among the nobles, and may have been one of the delegates who prevented hostilities. He was a Guelf and then actively engaged in all public affairs. He had passed through the ordeals which opened the way to the highest magistracies. In a registry of the year 1297, may be seen his name inscribed on the matriculations of the *art* of physician and chemist, which was the sixth. Every citizen was obliged to be inscribed in one of the arts of Florence, although not embracing that profession. Hence it has been supposed that Dante had been physician or druggist. He has never been either the one nor the other, but merely entered the sixth art *major*, which by the elevation of the functions of its members, corresponded more with the dignity of Noble and the gravity of Poet. His importance in the republic accrued rapidly. At this period, Dante was consulted by the government on every public business. No law was reformed, no custom changed, no peace made, no war declared, no communication received, no reply dispatched, no deliberation was closed, without taking the advice of Dante. Boccaccio observes that public faith, all earthly and divine

things seemed to solve in him. However, there was one moment during this period of his life, when the poet's soul evinced a lassitude from the agitation of public affairs. Terrified perhaps, and revolted by the scenes of violence and disorder he witnessed, or nourishing a secret presentiment of the political calamities that awaited him, he once seemed decided to abandon the public stage, and return into private life. The yearning for power which seems innate with every man, whatever may be the century he belongs to, the 14th or the 19th, the public favour, the persuasive argument of his friends and family, all combined to dissuade him from depriving the republic of his services. Filelfo, who wrote a life of Dante a century after the poet's death, having then access to all the documents, correspondence and diplomas at the offices of the government, all of which have since disappeared—Filelfo states that from 1293 to 1300, Dante was fourteen times entrusted with missions or embassies for the service of the republic. In those simpler ages ambassadors had neither the permanent responsibility or sumptuous duties of our times; an ambassador then, started alone, or merely with a servant, on horseback, fulfilled his errand, and returned in the same manner, on the same horse. Among the special missions entrusted to the poet, two were at Genoa and Sienna for the delimitation of frontiers; one at Venice to solicit the alliance of the powerful Queen of the Adriatic; two were at Naples—the first to obtain the King's sympathy, the latter to save a Florentine condemned to death, in which objects his persuasive eloquence was crowned with success.

Dante was twice sent to the King of Hungary, in Puglia, and obtained what his government required; and four times to the Pope Boniface VIII. It will be seen that it was during the last of these legations to Rome that he received the decree of his exile. One of his embassies has ever remained doubtful. It has been supposed that, as he was perfectly master of the *langue d'oïl*, which Brunetto Latini had taught him, he must have been selected by the republic for an embassy to Paris, in 1295. During that year, Florence entered into a negotiation with Philip le Bel, with reference to the succession to the kingdoms of Arragon and Sicily. Boccaccio does not mention it. Filelfo relates that Dante concluded a treaty of alliance between Florence and the King of France, which may have been done without the personal presence at Paris of a Florentine ambassador; but, the whole of this diplomatic transaction is problematic or unknown. Macchiavelli alluding to this period, reprimands the negligence of the cotemporary historians, whom he accuses of culpable neglect for not transmitting to posterity some facts of the highest importance for the policy of the republic. We have observed that Dante being a Guelf, was in the service of the Guelfic government. But this was not all. He placed himself also, in the service of the separate government, called the *parte Guelfa*.

We have seen the republic of Florence governed by the great, and afterwards by a power constituted by the people. When the *grandi* were governing alone, the people constituted a separate governing body, but when the latter were victo-

rious,—absolute masters—they subdivided, and despite the existence of a popular government entrusted to the priors of the arts—despite a Gonfalonier who appeared to possess the general approbation, although all belonged to the aristocratic Guelfs,—there existed a separate, almost secret body composed of the popular Guelfs. This superposed body was regularly organized, and its magistrates called themselves *capitani di parte Guelfa.* They had their deliberations, their treasury, and secret measures; their influence increased gradually, until they superseded the official government. This sort of League, was called *la taglia Guelfa,* and Dante after having served the *popolano,* or Guelfic authority, was employed by the *parte Guelfa;* they sent him in embassy to San-Geminiano, and other *comuni* of the *taglia,* to invite them to appoint a *capitano di parte* instead of the one whose time of service had expired. We are now approaching the cruel struggles engendered by the violence of factions, in which he occupies a conspicuous position. But despite these factions, subdivisions and acrimony of parties, never was the republic of Florence more glorious, more splendid and progressive. The delicate flowers of civilization ever bloom with more beauty after the great social convulsions; they shone resplendently at this period, and afterwards in the midst of all the tempests of the sixteenth century.

Pistoia was one of the cities of the *taglia Guelfa,* and amongst its most distinguished families, was that of the Cancellieri. One day, Lore and Geri, two young men belonging to this family, came to high words and a scuffle, in which

Geri was slightly wounded by Lore; the latter's father, Guglielmo, deeply afflicted by this accident, and in the intention of soothing the evil, sent Lore to the father of the wounded youth, to offer excuses and obtain forgiveness; but this father, Bertacca, was of a vindictive nature; far from being softened by such a generous proceeding, he ordered his valets to seize Lore, and his right hand to be lopped off--telling him to go to his father and state that wounds are treated with iron—not with words. Such a cruelty excited the wrath of Guglielmo to the highest degree; he ordered all his people to arm themselves in order to avenge it. Bertacca, prepared to defend himself; then, not only the whole family, but the whole city of Pistoia flew to arms. As one of the Cancellieri had had a wife or mother, whose name had been *Bianca*, that party was called the *Whites*; whilst the other, in opposition received the appellation of *Blacks*. Now the *Bianchi* and the *Neri*, or Whites and Blacks, waged a merciless war on each other.

Pistoia became a scene of daily encounters, murders and snares. Both parties, unable to reconcile, came to Florence, where we have seen already the two powerful families of the Cerchi and of the Donati, whose rivalry and discord would not have led to extreme violence had not fresh fuel been brought from Pistoia. The Blacks, old friends of the Donati, placed themselves under the protection of Corso Donati; the Whites, in order to be supported against the Donati, had recourse to the assistance of Vieride Cerchi. The hatred and animosity of both families and parties assumed the most threatening aspect. However,

the Whites, associated with the popular Guelfs, were the most powerful;—they governed democratically; every one of their acts was a threat directed against the nobility and against the Blacks. But the latter, independently of their own forces, were protected by the Pope, Boniface VIII.

We have said that generally, the policy of the Pontiffs, with reference to the Guelfs and the Ghibellins, was in a spirit of conciliation, or in the intention to keep an equilibrium between both, in order to establish an Italian, instead of an Imperial ascendency. Boniface, however, did not evince that unity of conduct; he was not actuated by general views of a pontifical policy; he yielded apparently to his personal antipathies and predilections, and his intervention in the Florentine affairs increased the general exasperation. He continually kept secret intelligences with the Blacks, whose manœuvres and intrigues were sternly watched by the Whites, and baffled. Such was the state of parties, when took place an event of little importance in itself, but which, however, throws some light on the policy of Boniface. In the month of April, 1300, three persons residing in Florence, and in constant relations with the Pope, were denounced to the government as conspirators; and brought immediately to trial. The nature of the accusation is not clearly defined. But scarcely was Boniface informed of the prosecution on the part of the Florentine government against them, that he sent orders to stop it. No attention was paid to the order, and the accused were condemned to pay an enormous fine. One of the most active

priors, at whose instigation the trial had taken place, was a Saltarello, an ultra-white, who became afterwards one of the companions in exile of the poet; he is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia* as an object of the most particular antipathy. Boniface indignant at the scorn manifested for his orders, wrote to the Bishop of Florence, desiring him to insist on having immediately the sentence annulled. The bishop was not listened to. Now the Pope wrote to the government of Florence a furious letter, summoning the three principal authors of the sentence,—which he called illegal,—and especially Saltarello,—to appear before him, within eight days, or be exposed to his decree against them; threatening at the same time the whole municipality of Florence with divers temporal and spiritual penalties. These new threats had no more effect than the former, the judgment of the Florentine government remained untouched; nobody appeared at Rome, and the whole population of Florence was excommunicated. Now, Boniface addressed a second letter to the republic, in which he enters into long and formal arguments, the object of which was to refute the general report that, the Florentines pretended that the Pope had no right to interfere with the government of their republic. All this was taking place precisely when the two parties—the Whites and the Blacks—were in the highest state of exasperation. A mere spark,—the slightest occasion, would suffice to cause a conflagration; and it is what happened very soon after.

May day was formerly a day of great rejoicings

and public festivals in Tuscany. In the evening of the 1st of May, 1300, the square of *San Trinita* was crowded with men, women, children—all singing and dancing with southern merriness. Two brilliant cavalcades happened to meet, in the midst of this joyful crowd; one consisted of young men of the family of the Cerchi, the other of young men of the Donati family. The cavalcades cast upon each other glances of scornful hatred, and soon after came to blows. The adherents of each party seized on their arms and entrenched themselves in their usual posts, so that Florence ceased in a few hours to be a scene of revelry to become one of bloodshed. Boniface soon informed by his agents of the rupture at Florence and of the danger of the Blacks, sent immediately, on the spot, Cardinal Aquasparta, highly esteemed for his learning and piety, with the mission to restore peace and obtain that the public offices should be equally divided between the two parties as formerly. The cardinal was well received; but the Whites took umbrage, and rejected his intervention as well as his pretension to reform the government. Both parties continued in a state of still greater irritation, armed, ready to settle their differences with the sword; the cardinal having failed in his efforts, he only remained in the city in order to support the Blacks, by secret intrigues and conspiracies, but watched by the Whites whose wrath and suspicion were thus excited to the highest degree. Such was the state of things, in June, 1300, when the six Priors or governors of the republic, whose functions were expiring, had to appoint their successors. The position was critical; they were

resigning their authority, when the city was under the weight of excommunication—the irascible Pontiff had been offended—when the civil war suspended by chance for a moment, was on the point of breaking out again.

Under such circumstances the choice was difficult, and a subject of anxiety. The new priors were elected; the names of five of them alone have been preserved; and out of those five, four are so obscure and unknown that nothing remains about them. Dante was the fifth; thus, as his colleagues were without fame and capacity, it seems evident, that the intention was to concentrate upon him all the authority, as well as the responsibility of the approaching events. The tumults continued and increased under his government. The aggressive conduct of the Blacks supported by the cardinal was daily more threatening. The Whites always on their guard, contrived, it is generally believed, to have the cardinal secretly threatened, and the prelate terrified, left hastily Florence, renewing the former excommunication. The Blacks, although deprived of his assistance, did not appear desponding; on the contrary, they now arrogantly boasted of the arrival of a French prince, who was expected to come and restore *order* in Florence and Italy.

The menace of the Blacks was well founded. Boniface had a few years before commenced negotiations with the court of France, in the view of inviting to Italy, Charles de Valois,—brother of Philip *le Bel*—with a military force, in order that both the prince and his army might be at the disposal of the pope for the service of the

Church of Rome. The French prince being little disposed to listen to the pontifical overtures, the negotiations remained long pending; finally, they were resumed, and the bulls, magnificent promises and encouragements of Boniface, decided Charles de Valois to come to Italy in the course of 1300, with a certain number of French knights and gendarmes. The report of this convention soon spread in the whole country; it produced every where, especially in Tuscany, the deepest agitation. The Whites were seriously alarmed, whilst the Blacks were exulting, and so little guarded in their sanguine exultation that they roused the indignation of the government on the following occasion. The Blacks assembled in a church to deliberate on their interests, the purport of which proved to be that they intended to request Pope Boniface to recommend them to the French prince, whose arrival was expected, and place themselves under his special protection. Florence was scandilized by such conduct; the Whites, thus threatened, flew to arms, and a furious civil struggle seemed inevitable. Now the priors began to act; they had hitherto tolerated the intrigues and conspiracies of the Blacks; they felt it was high time to check them. Dante assembled the people round the government residence. Among the citizens assembled was Dino Compagni, the chronicler of Florence. As soon as Dante found himself strengthened enough to protect his authority, he issued a decree which banished the most turbulent Blacks, and in order to give a public testimony of his impartiality, he comprised in the decree of exile those Whites who had been the first to

appeal to the sword in the last disturbances. Among the latter, was Dante's intimate friend, Calvalcanti, who was notable for his ardent hostility to the Blacks, and very naturally the head of the faction, as well as Corso Donati, who was condemned to a perpetual exile and to the confiscation of his property. But among the exiled Whites was not comprised another chief of the party,—Vieri de'Cerchi. Was the omission accidental, as maintained by many, or was it an indulgent partiality as affirmed by others? However it may be, the latter interpretation was adopted by the political enemies of Dante. It seems, on the other hand, that they were good reasons for the over severity of the measures against Corso Donati; it seems, that he had already been banished, had broken his ban, and that the perpetual exile pronounced against him, was justified by his non-obeyance, and infringment of a former condemnation.

All the biographers of Dante, who have collected the traditions of his time, or, who have consulted many authentic documents, now lost, all agree in establishing the pre-eminence of his influence, and in attributing to him the decree which struck such a decisive blow on the two factions that had kept the republic in a perpetual agitation. There cannot be any doubt but that the noble poet was inspired by the purest motives, little thinking what cup of bitterness he was thus preparing for himself—what virulent hatred against his person he was thus giving rise to, in both factions. It certainly evinces in him, along with a great political integrity, a great degree of political inexperience verging on sim-

plicity. History proves that in a state convulsed by factions, the statesman or hero, must adhere exclusively to one of the parties,—and with it fall or conquer, or in the case of a *coup d'état*, crushing all factions, his object must be to remain, sword in hand, absolute master. The duties of Dante as prior, ceased on the 15th of August, 1300. It was not a cessation of political anxiety and activity to him; his country never stood in greater need of his services and energy. The Blacks, from their place of exile, had gone to Rome, and fanned the wrath of Boniface against the Whites. Corso Donati, especially, who had been in the service of the pontiff—governor of one of his cities—was esteemed and beloved by Boniface, who eagerly listened to all his suggestions of vengeance. On the other hand, the Whites, most of whom saw the danger that threatened them, decided on sending to the Pope, envoys entrusted with the mission of obtaining by entreaties and submission, the withdrawal of the bull that excommunicated them; there is every probability that Dante was among them.

This embassy must have arrived in Rome towards the end of September (1300.) Nothing is known as to the details of its reception and transactions; the subsequent events prove that it was of no avail, since Boniface continued the execution of the designs he had formed; there cannot be any doubt, we believe, that Dante was in Rome at this period, and that he beheld a magnificent spectacle which undoubtedly made a deep impression on his poetical genius. It was the year of the Jubilee instituted by Boni-

face. The historian Giovanni Villani was among the distinguished Florentines who repaired to the Jubilee of 1300. Innumerable crowds of Christians from every part of Europe, were everflowing in the eternal city. Those motley masses—with their joyful murmur and extraordinary febrile activity, were all united by the same sacred hope—the same boundless enthusiasm; and Dante could not contemplate such a scene without emotion; it must have been in order to invest his sublime emotion with a hallowed consecration, that he fixed on the year 1300, for the epoch of his immortal vision.

The Whites, thus repelled by Boniface, sought to strengthen their party; they obtained from those of Lucca and Pistoia, the expulsion of the Black leaders, because the Blacks exiled under the priorate of Dante had not remained in the localities assigned to them, but had fled to become agitators in various parts of Italy; thus the Whites felt dispensed from all consideration for the other faction, and they recalled all their partisans who had been exiled at the same time at Sarzana. Guido Cavalcanti, suffering when banished, had been allowed to return to Florence long before the others, but too late; he only survived his return a few days and expired. His death became a subject of bereavement to all—to none so acute as to Dante. Several months passed in apparent tranquillity; it was the calm of uncertainty and expectation. The menaces of Boniface—the avenging French prince, remained as a shadow, still hovering over the Whites. Nothing more was heard about either. Both were becoming a vague, mysterious eventuality, for some distant period, when suddenly the

whole of Tuscany received the tidings that Charles de Valois had crossed the Alps and was advancing. The Blacks from all parts hastened to meet him, and joined his escort. The French prince, was advancing towards Florence and preceded by the darkest forebodings; the council general of the republic assembled to deliberate on the menacing emergencies. The results of the meeting alone are known. It was resolved that another embassy would be sent to the pope with expressions of submission and respect, and entreat him not to send Charles de Valois to Florence, that any other person would be more successful in his object for the pacification of Tuscany. Dante was unanimously selected as the head of the embassy. It was on this occasion, according to Boccaccio, that he said: "*Se io vo, chi rimane? e se io remango, chi va?* If I go, who remains? and if I remain, who goes? This exclamation is not mentioned by any of the co-temporaries of Dante. If it was pronounced, it was a natural expression of the consciousness of his own worth,—of a degree of pride inseparable from such lofty natures, and not a self-puffing up, as insinuated by the fastidious cant of shallow, inexorable moralists.

Dante, with the two colleagues associated to him, took immediately his departure for Rome. Boniface received them with every seeming of courteous sympathy, but listened to none of their suggestions. He insisted on their leaving the whole of the transactions to his paternal discretion. In truth,—the fate of Florence had been decided before the arrival of the ambassadors. The Pontiff had had a long conference with the French prince; they had come to an understand-

ing for the arrangement of Tuscan affairs. A solemn bull dated, *Anagni*, September, 1301, had invested the prince with the title of *Pacificator* of Tuscany. The latter evidently—as the subsequent events proved it—had received secret instructions, besides the official mission, with which he was openly invested, and the object of which was announced in a vague, equivocal manner. Boniface, after his interview with the Florentine ambassadors, dismissed two of them, urging them to hasten back to Florence, and exhort their fellow-citizens to confidence and submission. But he kept Dante at Rome—thus sending back the two, both weak and easily persuaded, whose illusion would be shared by others, and depriving the Florentine government of the man whose energy and genius might inspire some heroic and well concerted plan of resistance. In the meantime he secretly urged Charles de Valois to proceed at once to Florence. We are now approaching one of those dark episodes which sully the pages of the history of France. The French prince was on a mission of vengeance and treason. His little army was daily reinforced by the arrival of some nobles—adventurers—as well as other Blacks, with their chief, Corso Donati. The deepest agitation was reigning at Florence. A new *Signoria* had been appointed, purposely composed of men known for their moderation, in the hope of some conciliating measures. After many deliberations, it was resolved to send deputies to the prince, and learn, if possible, what were his intentions. Charles received them with a profusion of protestations about his affectionate and loyal

intentions; he appealed to the fame of the house of France, in which a traitor had never been found; he addressed patent letters to the *Signoria*, in which he solemnly promised to respect the liberty, laws, and customs of the Florentines. The government and the people, completely re-assured, abandoned themselves to unlimited confidence. It was decided that the prince should be received with the greatest honours.

The prince made his entrance on the 1st of November; the whole population rushed to meet him; they hailed him with the most enthusiastic acclamations; endless festivals and rejoicings celebrated the event. Charles de Valois, on the other hand, took every precaution not to give umbrage to the citizens; he and his troops entered the city without arms. Corso Donati, who had hitherto accompanied him, now appeared to leave him, but remained prowling within a few miles of the city; the three or four following days passed in perfect calm and harmony. On the 5th, the prince convoked the Podesta, Priors, the Bishop, the members of the different councils, —in short not only the *Signoria*, but all the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of Florence; he requested, in accordance with the laws and customs, in great and unforeseen emergencies, to be invested with the dictatorial authority. It was spontaneously granted. He swore on the gospel to preserve order in the republic, and to respect her liberty and her rights. But scarcely was Charles de Valois returned to his palace, that the city took immediately a different aspect. Armed men, knights in complete armour,

appeared menacingly in every street. The Blacks and their adherents, emerged from the palaces and houses, sword in hand. Corso Donati and his band, burnt one of the gates of the city, and formed a military camp, in the heart of the city, as a rallying point for all his partisans. The Florentine people flew to arms, but found no one to command them; the Cerchis and other chiefs of the Whites, took to an ignoble flight, and fortified themselves in their palaces. The priors were men void of capacity and energy. Corso Donati soon remained master of the city; he expelled them, took possession of the palace of the people, and now went from street to street—giving vent to his ferocity and vengeance; the palaces and houses of the Whites were plundered and burned; his bandittis did not stop to any discrimination. The spirit of destruction spread in the neighbouring country; and the plunder, massacre, and conflagration lasted one whole week.

After a week, the destructors were satiated. Florence stood, in her desolation, as if she had been stormed by barbarians. The French prince beheld all those infamies; he did not endeavour to check them; his interference would perhaps have been of no great avail; and, it must remain, to a certain extent, a matter of uncertainty,—whether all those horrors were in accordance with his secret orders, or, whether he had or not anticipated the excesses committed by the Blacks—although it was most certainly to procure the triumph of that faction, by perfidious means, that he had come to Florence. A new government was installed, composed of the most violent

Blacks, whose first proceedings were exclusively to frame new laws in their interests and ruinous for the vanquished faction. One of those laws authorized the Podesta to make inquiries into any misdeeds that might have been committed by former priors, even in the cases when they had already been absolved from any imputation or accusation. This law was intended as a sword hanging over the head of all those who had opposed the mission of Charles de Valois. In the meantime, Cardinal Aquasparta—the same who had come on a former occasion to plead in favour of the Blacks,—now re-appeared at Florence, but this time with the intention to put a check, if possible, to their implacable conduct, and endeavour to effect a partial understanding between the two factions. His mission, more apparent than real, was not followed by any results, excepting, perhaps, the reconciliation of a few families. On the other hand, the French prince, paid a visit to Rome, to receive, no doubt, the last instructions of Boniface, which he faithfully executed soon after,—namely: the expulsion of the Whites. On the 4th of April, 1302—a general decree was proclaimed; it pronounced the immediate expulsion of all the Whites. More than six hundred left Florence, and sought a refuge in the different parts of Italy.

Dante was in Rome during the sanguinary events we have mentioned. What must have been his anxiety? Nothing is known of the details of his life during his sojourn, after and during his second embassy. He must have heard through the public rumour—and very inaccurately—the calamities of his dear fatherland—the treason,

of Charles de Valois,—the triumph and fury of the Blacks. He was still in Rome during the visit just mentioned, of the French prince to the pope. Nothing but conjectures can be obtained respecting this epoch of his life. In the month of January, before the decree of general expulsion of the Whites, the government of the Blacks had already applied the law alluded to, which authorised an inquiry into the administration of former priors; and the new Black Podesta, installed by Charles de Valois, pronounced a sentence against several of them, among whom appeared the name of Dante. The text of this condemnation, found in the archives of Florence, has been published; it states that Dante and the others are accused of two crimes, committed by them in the exercise of their office, viz:—the resistance to the mission of the French prince—and to have made a traffic of their authority,—otherwise, misused the public money—*Baratteria*. All the accused were summoned to appear before the podesta within forty days, and pay within the same period, a fine of eight thousand livres. If they obeyed in performing both, they were, nevertheless, to be exiled for two years out of Tuscany. By neither appearing nor paying, they incurred the confiscation of their property and a perpetual banishment. Now these accusations were grounded on the public voice, and this system of accusation was borrowed from the famous ordinances of public justice of the most democratical period of the republic, by which two witnesses or accusers, not opposed, sufficed to constitute what was called the public voice.

With reference to the two charges against

Dante;—the first, concerning his opposition to the French intervention, was highly honourable to him, but it was untrue; there was no certainty at Florence about the mission of the French prince in either faction, during the priorate of Dante. The fact was in the designs of Boniface. The Blacks privately boasted of it—but there was no official act of Dante and his colleagues on the subject. With reference to the accusation of *Baratteria*, it does not deserve the refutations which many Italians have accumulated. Dante, scorned it so intensely, that he has never condescended to justify himself by the slightest allusion to it. His avenging hand had on many occasions crushed such acts of corruption with inexorable severity. It was evidently one of those calumnies engendered by a blind, stupid hatred, for, the victim was absent and could not be heard. The proud and irascible poet must unavoidably have been a special object of envy, jealousy and rancour. Many satirical, insulting pieces about his person are still existing, in which such an accusation would have been very appropriate; but they do not contain one word which could justify the slightest suspicion of the kind. It has been remarked by de Sismondi, that the text of the condemnation which condemned the poet, who was the founder of Italian literature, was written in the most barbarous language; it forms the most curious mixture of Latin and Italian.

There is every reason to suppose that Dante was informed, as soon as possible, of the sentence pronounced against him, and that he was in the impossibility of paying so large a sum within so

short a time. He remained in Rome, waiting to see the course of events; it is not known whether he took any step to mitigate the other sentence that awaited him. The delay stated, expired on the 10th of March. On that very day the second sentence was pronounced, by which Dante, and thirteen other individuals, were declared rebellious to the republic of Florence, and condemned to perpetual banishment. This iniquitous and atrocious sentence added formally and expressly that, if any of them fell into the hands of the Florentine government, he would be burnt, until death: *Igne comburatur sic quod moriatur.* Such was the frenzy of factions! It no longer sufficed to reduce to ashes the homes and dwellings of the foes; citizens were now threatened with being burnt without being heard and tried. During those distressing events, Dante's wife, Gemma, and his children, were still at Florence; he had left them, says Boccaccio, because the latter were too young to follow him in his adventurous travels. Gemma being related to some of the chiefs of the Blacks, she could not be considered as exposed to any danger; she had moreover some small property, from her own dowry, which was with great difficulty saved from the rapacity of the victorious faction. This did not suffice to maintain the whole family, and, as she had no hope of assistance, she had recourse to a manual industry, and remained obscurely, faithfully devoted to her children.

When Dante was informed of the abominable sentence of the 10th of March, he must have been agitated by feelings of anxiety and unspeakable resentment. The whole proceeding was as

odious and humiliating as cruel. He found his name coupled with that of a certain Salterelli; he felt galled to be accused of complicity with a man whom he despised; he alludes to it several times in his poem. He left Rome immediately and went to Sienna, to be as near Tuscany as possible. Perhaps he was hoping that some remedy or mitigation to all the calamities that assailed him, might yet be possible. He remained at Sienna, waiting for news from Florence; they came, and proved worse still than could be expected. Charles de Valois had recently returned from his visit to Boniface at Rome, and had just struck the last decisive blow on the Whites, which has been related; namely—the decree of general expulsion of the 4th of April, 1302. Dante heard at the same time the details of a foul treachery connected with that act of spoliation along with its consequences. It seems that a provençal of Charles's suite feigned a great wrath against him and the intention to assassinate him. He enticed in his simulated conspiracy several weak, injured young men of the vanquished Whites; he persuaded them to sign promises and engagements,—and afterwards betrayed them, and gave them up to Charles de Valois. The prince affected a wrathful indignation, and threatened the Whites with every vengeance. The latter, terrified, fled from the city; but whether they fled or not, all their property was confiscated—their palaces, dwellings, as well as country houses, all destroyed. Six hundred of them, we have said, were banished, without reckoning the women and children who accompanied the unfortunate victims. The

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French prince received for his share of the spoil, twenty-five thousand golden florins. And thus terminated his mission of peace in Tuscany. Dante, although already condemned on the 10th of March before, found that he was again comprised in this general proscription. So much his enemies were determined not to let an opportunity of ruining him, escape. His fine house at Florence had already been plundered and burnt down by the bands of Corso Donati. He now heard that the several farms which he possessed in various parts of the Florentine territory were ravaged, and the soil awarded to others. He heard of the penury of his wife and children. He felt that all was over with him. He was banished, ruined, proscribed. A deep gloom—an unspeakable anguish assailed him. It paralysed his whole being for a time. But his energetic soul soon awoke mightier. Hope and genius could not be torn away from him. Here commences a new era in his existence—his long life of bitter exile, and the creation of his great poem.

CHAPTER IV.

Current anecdotes on Dante.—His political principles.—He becomes a Ghibellin.—His violence.—Reasons assigned to the change.—His fearless independence.—Dante goes to Arezzo.—Uguccione della Faggiola.—Organization of the Whites.—Ghibellin faction.—Dante elected member of one of the councils —Modifications in the opinions of parties.—Hostilities between the two factions.—Accession of Benedict XI.—Mission of Cardinal de Prato;—it fails.—Sanguinary conflict in Florence.—Conflagration.—New expedition of the White-Ghibellins.—Organization of their army and council.—Its failure.—Adventures of Dante from 1304 to 1307;—his *Canzoni*.—The *Convito*.—Date of its composition.—Its object.—Character of the work.—Its peculiarities.—Brief analysis of the *Convito*.—Opinions of Ozanam, Bonterweck and Count Balbo.—Quotation from Count Balbo.—Wegele, the recent German historian of Dante.

DANTE, we have said, was ruined, banished, broken-hearted. A great number of Florentines had been deeply grieved in witnessing the destruction of his property, and on learning the cruel decree of exile pronounced against him. His poetry was extremely popular; his *Canzoni* were sang in the streets; they were the favourite ditties of the peasantry. Various anecdotes on the subject, have been collected in Italy,—transmitted to posterity, and, they have been constantly repeated as instances of the poetical sensitiveness and of the irritability of the poet. For instance:—Sacchetti relates that one day as the poet was passing—he heard a blacksmith (others say a pottery maker) at his work, singing the poet's verses, but mutilating them, upon which he entered the shop, seized his tools, and

was on the point of throwing them away in the street, when the poor man asked him if he was insane, and why he was thus spoiling his tools? —and that Dante coolly replied, "If you do not wish me to spoil what belongs to you, do not spoil that which is mine; you are singing my sonnets, but not as I have composed them; you disfigure my verses—you spoil my art, and I break your tools." Another very much of the same kind, is also related: it seems that Dante, then on a military expedition, overtook on the road, a man driving his donkey, singing also a fragment of one of his *Canzoni* but mixing with the verses, the exclamation which was destined to hasten the loaded animal, *arri*, each time accompanied by a blow. Dante struck the man, exclaiming: "That *arri* is not in my verses." It is impossible to say what degree of veracity belongs to these anecdotes; under all circumstances they certainly are not endowed with much importance.

But to return to the new period in Dante's life: it was not only a new era with reference to the events of his life—but also for his sentiments and principles. Dante, until the time of his exile had been a Guelf,—as Guelfic as he could possibly be. From the day of his banishment, his Guelfic zeal gradually cooled, until finally he became a Ghibellin. From 1302 to 1310, he remained a partial Guelf in his conduct, according to all appearances. During those years, he had not lost all hope of being re-called from exile; he had been careful not to give new causes of resentment to the Florentine Government. This change in the principles of Dante has been a

subject of reproach to the poet, during five hundred years. He has been accused of inconstancy, instability, even of apostacy, but most unjustly and unreasonably, as we must endeavour to explain. F. Schlegel, in his "History of Literature," accuses Dante of having given to the whole of his poem, a deep colouring of the Ghibellin spirit. We will see how far this assertion is in accordance with the facts. But in the first instance, let us admit a probability to which Dante is entitled. It must be remembered that by the peace of Constance, the freedom of Italy was recognized by the Germanic empire, the only reserve made by the treaty of peace, being a last appeal to the emperor. In the year 1300, this right of the Germanic sovereignty and a few others of far less importance, was obsolete—no longer admitted in Italy excepting in a few cities. Dante, who was a diplomatist, may very well have been brought to researches and investigations on this question of public law, and of international treaties; he may have carefully examined the case,—he so acute and learned—and have judged that in the whole transaction the two parties had not equally fulfilled the conditions of the treaty. The Guelf in his bitterness and distress, may have found conscientiously strong arguments in favour of the Ghibellins, which soothed his sorrows. Count Balbo, admits that some of the acts of Dante in his exile have not been irreproachable; he admits the legitimacy of Dante's violence of feeling against his persecutors; he does not attach that exaggerated importance to the poet's transition from one party to another, as others have done,

but blames the exaggeration of resistance and the facility with which he entered into a confidential brotherhood with former foes. Mr. Balbo observes, that Dante who had been a thoughtful Guelf—a moderate and impartial White, became, from the day of his exile—inspired by vengeance and hatred—a furious Ghibellin; and that his great error was a boundless rage, which he subdued in his deeds, but to which he gave a free vent in his words. And the consequences have been fatal to truth; for it must be admitted that the judgments of Dante have been considered as emanating from a higher power. Something providential has accompanied the inspirations of the poet in the ideas of the Italian people; indeed, all those who are not well versed in the history of his life and times, accept his whole creation as if the earthly man, torn by so many pangs, had not been roused to the most sublime eloquence, by fearful passions—and an implacable rancour.

And this is not all with reference to Dante's change of political party. The Blacks, masters of Florence, had among them a great number of deserters from the old Guelfic faction; they kept the denomination of Guelf, which now expressed the partizanship of the princes of the house of France, whom they continued to recognize as their liege lords. On the other hand, the vanquished faction, attracted by the sympathy of common misfortune, united with the vanquished of another period, and became, to a certain extent, of necessity, drawn into the ranks of the Ghibellins, whose predominant feeling was the hatred of France. Therefore, Dante,

had, at once, a natural link of sympathy with the Ghibellins. Nevertheless, he followed his companions in exile; he took part—as it will be seen — in the abortive attempt to re-enter Florence by the force of arms. And there—depressed and repelled by their incapacity—by their disorderly, narrow views, he withdrew; he remained inactive and aloof, until the accession of the Germanic Emperor, Henry VII., 1310; then he wrote in favour of this prince a memorable and eloquent letter,or manifesto, inviting him to turn his victorious arms against Florence. This letter of Dante has remained as an ineffaceable blot on the splendid fame of the poet. No doubt the act is to be deplored; still it was not characterized by any servility. The monarchical authority, such as he understood it and wished it, was not a military feudal despotism, but a peaceful, civilizing sovereignty, protector of the interests and liberties of all, recognizing the distinct, inviolable authority of the Church. He calls the emperor, the servant of mankind. He attacked, with violence, the privileges of feudalism, the inheritance of public functions, and even of property; his prose writings abound with democratical principles. On the other hand, the remembrance of the former prosperity, greatness, as well as purity of manners, of the former Florence, contrasted to the corruption, incapacity, and cruelty of the new men and *parvenus*, a state of things which infallibly succeeds to an excessive, restless democracy, filled the patrician heart of Dante with unspeakable scorn, the expression of which frequently recurs in his poem, and contrasts, apparently, with his

convictions. Thus, if Dante, by his respect for the Church, by his philosophical attacks on feudalism, remained latently inclined towards the Guelfs, his monarchical ideas and his hatred of France, made of him a Ghibellin, and naturally so, considering the cruel iniquities of the Black Guelfs against him. He never wavered; he remained faithfully, fearlessly attached to the medium principles he had fixed upon. He stood independent, between the two factions, forming alone, by his omnipotent genius, a militant, indomitable party. When the two factions, in their tumultuous movements, alternately turned to him as one of the instigators of their crimes, he launched forth lofty protestations; he struck deadly, immortal blows with an indefatigable vigour upon all—on his companions in exile, on the Blacks and the Whites, the Guelfs and the Ghibellins, as, for instance, in the sixth and seventeenth cantos of the *Paradiso*. He then fearlessly multiplied the number of his enemies, anxious only to imitate the justice of Providence, and leave his name pure and unsullied in the eyes of posterity. His fame long remained clouded by historical ignorance and vulgar prejudices. But the light of truth, shedding, finally, its divine rays on the melancholy figure of the great Alighieri, the world now does him the justice, and bears him the testimony, which his own conscience admits in his *Paradiso*, in his interview with his ancestor, Cacciaguida, namely, that his cause must not be confounded with that of an impious race, that he alone had the glory to be his whole party.

To resume the thread of the adventure of

Dante. After a short stay at Sienna, he, along with the other refugees, was obliged to leave it. It was too near Rome. Although still a White, with a faint Guelfic tinge, he naturally turned to the Ghibellins; they alone evinced a strong interest in the claims of the Whites, whilst the Blacks were proclaiming that whoever was not with them was Ghibellin. Dante, with other exiles, went to Arezzo, where the Government was Ghibellin. He found himself in the midst of men of an inferior capacity and character; it is doubtful whether he had a friend amongst them for whom he could entertain a real esteem. Among the names mentioned of those who were then in contact with him, are found Giacheto de' Malispini, nephew and continuator of Ricordano de' Malispini, author of a chronicle which is one of the most curious monuments of Italian literature; and another, whose name fixes the attention—Petrarco di Parenzo, one of the notaries of the republic, and father of the great Petrarch. Arezzo was well fortified; it was governed by a Podesta of some celebrity, Uguccione della Faggiola. This Uguccione was notable in the whole of Italy, for his courage and great physical strength. He was a sort of Homeric hero. It was rumoured that his formidable voice could keep up the courage of an army, that, he alone checked whole battalions, that he required a huge armour to cover his enormous body,—consumed an incredible quantity of food, but at the same time, that he was gentle, affable, intelligent, and a lover of letters. He knew Dante's *canzoni*; he offered him his friendship, and pledged himself to

a lasting affection. We have said, that the Guelfs divided in Whites and Blacks; and among the Ghibellins, the most rigid received the name of *Sechi;* those of whom Uguccione was the chief were called *Verdi;* they were the moderate section,—they had not broken entirely with Rome and the Pontiff, and Dante commenced by belonging to this Green--White—Ghibellin party.

The exiled, vanquished Whites, prepared to wage war against the victorious Blacks, masters of Florence. They were numerous. They had secured the assistance of the Whites of Pistoïa, and of the Ghibellins of Arezzo, Sienna, Pisa, as well as of those Whites, who had retired in their strong country castles, and were there prepared to defend themselves. All assembled in a solitary castle in the mountains, in order to organize their plans. They formed a government, somewhat analogous to that of Florence. They established two councils; one of twelve members, and the other, a secret council. These two councils were, in cases of emergency, to add new members, and assemble together, forming then, a sort of general council, representing the mass of the party. The secret council, was the executive, active part of government. Dante was elected a member of the other one of the twelve members. This government, composed of Whites and Ghibellins, settled at Arezzo, as the most central point of all its partisans; and they appointed as general of their army, Alexander de Romana, one of the most celebrated chiefs of the Ghibellins. In the meantime the Blacks, in Florence, were making active preparations to encounter their

foes, and to renew the former struggles between the Guelfs and the Ghibellins. From what has already been stated, it may be understood that the principles of the two factions had undergone considerable changes. Now the Whites and the Blacks, respectively, yielded to influences—opposed to those which they had hitherto followed. Now, the popular Guelfs, or Whites, obliged to have recourse to the assistance of the Ghibellins, were going to war in the interest of the nobility and of feudalism, whilst the aristocratic Guelfs, or Blacks, being in need of all the forces of the Florentine people, must, of necessity, give way to the democratical tendencies of this very people. Thus, one faction had changed its opinions in order to secure the power they had obtained, and the other, had done pretty much the same, in the hope of recovering the authority they had lost.

The Whites, whom we must now call the Whites-Ghibellins, had established their head-quarters at Arezzo; but the Pope Boniface, after vainly endeavouring to prevent the impending war, after having conferred many favours, on that gigantic Podesta Uguccione, after having promised him a cardinal's hat for one of his sons, easily persuaded him to use every means in his power to expel the Whites-Ghibellins from Arezzo. The Podesta complied. He found so many means of molesting them, that they left the city; some withdrew to Sienna, others to Pistoïa; the greater number, and among them Dante, to Forli. This expulsion did not prevent them from immediately commencing the war. With an army of twelve hundred horse, and

four thousand foot soldiers, they felt very sanguine. Their first attempt was to besiege the fortress of Pulciano, in the upper valley of the Sieve, but they hastily abandoned this attack at the approach of the enemy, leaving seventeen prisoners in their hands. Among these seventeen prisoners of the White faction, seven belonged to the most distinguished families of Florence. They were all executed.

This instance of deliberate cruelty, unheard of in the history of the Tuscan factions, moved deeply the feelings of Dante, as it appears by a *canzone* which refers to this sanguinary event, and expressive, although in a vague and obscure manner, of a profound indignation, honourable to the human heart. Another episode of this unfortunate campaign was the adventure of Carlino de Pazzi. This Carlino was one of the Florentine Whites, to whom the defence of a castle in the Val d'Arno had been entrusted; the Blacks besieged it without being able to take it; they were on the point of withdrawing, when Carlino sold it to them, giving up to them also the besieged, the greater part of whom were murdered. This infamy has been indelibly stigmatized by Dante; Carlino de Pazzi is to be found in one of the most horrible circles of the *Inferno*.

The Florentines continued their success; they took several feudal castles of the old Ghibellin nobles, ravaged their lands, carried off their vassals. The resources of the Whites-Ghibellins were on the point of being exhausted when their implacable enemy, Boniface VIII., died (Oct. 11, 1303), and was succeeded by Benedict XI. The

new Pontiff resumed—with reference to the factions at Florence,—the former system of conciliation adopted by the church, and his first step was to endeavour, by every means possible, to protect the weaker party against the strongest. For this purpose he sent Cardinal de Prato to Florence, with the special mission of obtaining the return of the exiled Whites, and such reforms in the government as would lead to an equal distribution of the public functions between the two parties. The Cardinal was hailed with great favour by the Florentine people; the Blacks reluctantly gave him the necessary powers for his mission of peace. In the meantime the Cardinal entered into negotiations with the vanquished, who appointed several delegates, or commissioners, in order to communicate with the Prelate; among these, the names of two only have been remembered by history; they were Dante and Petrarco. The reforms and changes now actively promoted under the pontifical auspices, were marked by great justice and great popular tendencies; they were, therefore, odious to all the chiefs of the Blacks, who had recourse to the darkest intrigues, plots, and menaces. So much so, that the Cardinal,—whether from fear, disgust, or hopelessness—left Florence suddenly, at the beginning of June, 1304, without having effected any thing. He was no sooner gone, than scenes of violence and bloodshed broke out again in Florence; the more petulant of the two factions commenced the combat; they were soon joined by the whole population; the fair city became one great field of battle. The Blacks were nearly overpowered by the over-

flowing tide of their enemies, when, to create a diversion, they imagined to set fire to the city. A fearful conflagration dispersed the combatants. The Whites and their partisans withdrew in consternation, without striking the final decisive blow, whilst the Blacks lost no time in issuing a formal decree of general expulsion against them, as well as all their partisans, without any distinction, and seeing it executed with their usual relentless cruelty. The conflagration lasted eight whole days, and consumed nearly two thousand houses, a great part of Florence.

Benedict XI. felt deeply grieved, on receiving the news of such deplorable calamities; he summoned peremptorily the leaders of the Black faction to appear before him; and the summons was so pressing, that they did not dare to resist it. Cardinal de Prato, actuated, it seems, by a strong desire of helping the weak against their implacable oppressors, sent secret information to the Whites—Ghibellins, at Arezzo—of the departure of the chiefs of the Blacks, urging them to seize on this opportunity for a vigorous attack on Florence. His advice was eagerly listened to. Secret preparations were made with a surpassing activity. In two or three days the Whites and Ghibellins collected a force of nine thousand foot, and one thousand six hundred horse. They came during the night, near the gates of Florence without awaking any suspicion of their approach; unfortunately, they halted, and waited the whole night for reinforcements; their presence became known in the city, where preparations for a defence were immediately made. Very few among the people would have

taken up arms against the Whites, but they dreaded their allies, the Ghibellins. Nevertheless, in the morning, the army of exiles decided bravely on a *coup de main;* they left a part of their forces in a village within two miles of Florence, and came under the walls of the city, broke open one of its gates, entered in military order, and fixed themselves in battle array in one of the squares. Thus posted, they despatched one of their battalions to try and sift the disposition of the people; this troop was attacked and driven back to the main corps in the square, which, however, remained firmly at its post. Thus, several hours were wasted; in the meantime the corps, left in the village two miles off, hearing an exaggerated account of the detachment which had been repulsed in the city, was seized with a panic and hastily retreated. The corps in the city, already discouraged by an unexpected resistance, fell in despondency, when they were informed of this flight. A burning July sun was scorching them,—they were maddened by a parching thirst; their horses were dropping under them; still they stood encompassed in the square; then, driven by despair, breathless, choaking—they fled by every lane towards the country, without ever attempting to defend their lives; a few were taken, and had they been pursued, not one would have escaped. Dante was engaged in this disastrous expedition; his feelings of indignation and disgrace must have been very keen, on beholding that, through the incapacity of chiefs, whom he already despised, a fortunate and unexpected opportunity of triumphantly re-entering Florence,

had been irrevocably lost. From this time, he abandoned that double faction; he withdrew. He formed a party in himself, and endeavoured to obtain his recall to his fatherland by other means than those of violence and bloodshed.

During about three years, from July, 1304, to the middle of 1307, the name of Dante is not to be met with in the history of the Tuscan factions. He disappears from the tumultuous scene. His wanderings are not easily followed. Leonardo d'Arezzo, one of the best authorities for the details of Dante's biography, states that the poet, proceeded at first to Verona, where d'Alboino della Scala was sovereign of the city. Dante himself confirms this testimony, by alluding to the court of the Scaligieri at Verona, as his first refuge. He had before held communications with the three brothers della Scala, as agents of the Whites, and obtained from them some auxiliary troops. His sojourn at Verona was not long. In July, 1306, he is found at Padoua. The same authentic documents state that a few weeks later he was at Castel-Nuovo, near Sarzana, negotiating an understanding between one of the Malespinas and the Bishop of Luni. Several of his minor poems of this period testify, by their allusions, the variety of localities where the unfortunate exile wandered during this interval; among them there are special indications of a somewhat prolonged sojourn in the solitudes of the Apennines, probably one of the castles of the Counts Guidi. But, however unsatisfactory may be the account of the movements of Dante during these three years, we have now a certitude much more in-

teresting, with reference to his occupations during that period. It was in this interval, as it is well established by Count Balbo and Fauriel, that he wrote, besides the minor poems alluded to, his *Convito*, and his Latin treatise *de Vulgari eloquio*. His object and hope in the composition of these writings, was undoubtedly to dispose the Florentines to receive favourably the applications made by his friends for his recall from exile. In the meantime, he himself addressed several letters to the various members of the government, explaining and justifying his political conduct; he addressed also to the population of Florence an apology commencing with "Oh, my people, what have I done to thee?" All those letters, addresses, and documents, are now lost; but they still existed in the fifteenth century. Leonardo d'Arezzo had them under his eyes when he wrote his life of Dante; and, not attaching to them the importance they deserved for a history of Dante and of Florence, he gave but very brief and vague extracts from them. The *canzoni* of this period refer mostly, and exquisitely, to his hopes of softening the resentment of his countrymen; they breathe a tender love for his native land, a lassitude of all political agitations, and a fervent yearning for the tranquil charms of home. He closes one of these *canzoni*, evidently written in the Apennines, by the following adieu: "O, my mountainous Canzone, thou startest away! Perhaps thou wilt visit Florence, my native city, which, destitute of love and pity, keeps me far away from her. If thou enterest the city, tell them all my master can-

not in future wage war against you; he is detained in the locality from whence I come, by so powerful a chain, that if your cruelty towards him is softened, he will not have the liberty of returning amongst you."

In all his expressions of lassitude of exile, of longing for his return to Florence, Dante does not introduce a shadow of servility or weakness. It is always the language and tone of a proud, dignified outcast, who does not stoop to obtain any favour or pity, but who demands anxiously, and with assurance, for more justice. His indomitable pride is strangely evinced in one of these *canzoni*; it is addressed to three Florentines, the three best friends he had in the city, and no doubt they were then earnestly engaged in solicitations on behalf of the poet. These three Florentines were his friends; he professed to consider them as the best among his countrymen, and it must have been his intention to speak of them in a friendly and honourable manner; yet this is the manner in which he alludes to them in this *canzone*: "O song, before you proceed anywhere else, go first to those three who are the least perverse in the city. Salute the two first, and endeavour, before you salute the third, to withdraw him from a wicked faction. Tell him that the good ought not to wage war against the good, before having endeavoured to triumph over the wicked; tell him that he who perseveres in evil, through shame, is insane." . . . . . It can easily be conceived how Dante must have treated those among his countrymen who had unjustly wronged him, since he addressed such language

to those whose influence he needed, and moreover, whom he esteemed and loved. It has remained a problem who could be two of those friendly Florentines; the third is justly supposed to be Jacobo da Certaldo; who, although an important personage in the Black faction, never ceased to correspond with Dante in exile, and to render him every service in his power. It had been supposed, that in consequence of the relationship between them, Corso Donati had been one of the protectors of the exiled poet; it seems, however, that at no period was there ever any friendly communication or intercourse between them.

Let us come to the two more important works of this period of Dante's life. The *Convito* must have been composed towards 1305. Before the invention of printing there was no positive rule, law, or custom with reference to writings. No very precise date can be assigned to them; and the modern researches on the subject have required the most minute labours and explanations, which have no interest for the general reader, although the results are frequently satisfactory and important. Formerly, a manuscript was lent to a friend or a protector, or a copy of it was circulated in a limited circle, and much later only made known to the public at large; hence, false notions often arose on the time of the composition. It was not unfrequent, also, to have whole works, or fragments from them, with mutilations, variations, secretly copied, hence the difficulty subsequently experienced to obtain the pure, original work. Thus many Italian commentators maintain that

the *Convito* was written in 1313, others so far back as 1297. There certainly was a great uncertainty about the dates of the composition of Dante's works; it is probable that he was engaged to more than one at a time; that he continued to revise and correct them as he proceeded to communicate them to his friends. All these considerations have been studied by Count Balbo, and his dates and statements remain irrefragable. The *Convito* so far resembles the *Vita Nuova*, that it is also a commentary on fourteen of the most beautiful *canzoni* composed by Dante before this period. There is this difference, that the commentary on the *Vita Nuova* is principally historical, whilst the latter is scientific and philosophical, evincing the poet's ideas on the relations between poetry and science. His object in the composition of this work has been mentioned. He wished to awake the sympathies of Florence. It abounds with allusions to his feelings and his country. "Ah!" he exclaimed, anticipating the faults of the work that will be blamed, "why has it not pleased the Master of the universe that the motives of my excuse should not exist. No one would have wronged me; I should not have had to endure exile and poverty. Florence, that noble and famous daughter of Rome, having thought proper to repel me from her sweet bosom, where I had been trained and nourished till the middle of my life, and in which I hope, with all my heart, if it pleases her, to close the time that I am destined to live, and rest myself, fatigued with having wandered as a pilgrim, having been almost begging through all the provinces in

which this idiom is spoken, laying bare the wounds of adverse fortune. . . . . I have been like a ship without rudder and sails, tossed by the withering breeze of painful poverty in various harbours, on divers shores. . . . . "
And in another part, he says:—"It is necessary that, elevating the style of the present work, I should enhance also its authority. Such must be my excuse for the depth of this commentary."

The Convito being, as stated, a scientific commentary on fourteen canzoni, written at different periods; and these canzoni being nothing more than ditties of love, of enthusiasm, of chivalrous *morale*, composed, many in honour of Beatrice, several of them for other ladies, it seems paradoxical that scientific discussions should be annexed to them. Dante adopted literally from Thomas Aquinas a system of allegorical interpretation. The poet had studied theology, especially in the works of the great scholastic saint, which at that period were the treasures of Italian science. Thomas Aquinas had adopted the system of symbol or allegory in the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures. According to this system, a fact or an idea of a given subject could be considered or taken for the expression or symbol of an analogous fact or idea belonging to another subject. Dante transferred this system into literary theories, and in the interpretation of poetry. Thus, he established that, besides the literal meaning of a piece of poetry, another indirect—veiled as it were—signification, either moral, religious, or philosophical, and of higher import, might be the real object of the poet. This latitude, once

admitted, love ditties could very well also be adopted as the basis of philosophic and scientific interpretations. It must easily be conceived that such a singular combination, so fanciful and favourable to capricious digressions, could not be advantageous to either science or poetry. However, Dante explains his reasons for giving an allegorical interpretation to these fourteen canzoni, which he never finished, the commentary not comprising more than three canzoni. He says that there were several persons whom they pleased, but more because of their beauty than their goodness; and that, as in the composition of these songs, his real intention was different from what it appears, he proposes to explain them allegorically, intending to manifest their real sense, into which no one can penetrate if it is not discovered by personal application. He observes, also, that his object is to justify himself from the shame of being supposed wholly subdued by an ardent passion, as might be inferred from the reading of these canzoni, a supposition which must cease on his declaring his whole thought, and on his demonstrating that virtue and not passion has been his motive. It would seem, therefore, that his love for Beatrice, or homage to any other lady, his hopes, his pangs, his ecstacies, have not inspired a variety of passages of the Convito, but that his real intention has been to introduce several problems of science and philosophy which were to be solved at some future period. It remains to be seen whether these assertions are to be accepted literally.

The best Italian critics consider the Italian

prose of the Convito as very remarkable for its terseness and gravity, also as the first prose composition in which appears the true genius of the Italian language. In this respect the style differs essentially from the *Vita Nuova*, which consists chiefly of fantastical, diluted poetical expressions.

The *Convito* contains many passages very lofty in thought, and of an almost sublime eloquence. It is a superior composition, evincing the high intellectual powers of its author, his scientific acquirements, and speculative faculties. But what has all this to do with his love songs? Let us see the relations he establishes between the two spheres of science and love. If we take the first of the three canzoni he comments upon, Dante begins by giving its literal sense. This canzone had already appeared in the *Vita Nuova*, with lighter developments. In the Convito the developments are overpowered by erudition, but the literal historical explanation given of it is extremely clear and natural. Beatrice had been dead two years, and the poet, at first plunged in the deepest gloom, had gradually become consoled, perhaps somewhat more than he wishes to confess. It may not be forgotten that we have spoken of another lady-love, who somewhat captivated him, although Beatrice was by no means banished from his thoughts and from his heart; hence, a struggle between the remembrance and the image of her and the new object of his admiration; hence, also, arose the composition of this first canzone, describing the struggle between the two sentiments, and being in every way an accurate

expression of the feelings and intentions of the poet, admitting the poetical manners of the age.

The Convito of Dante has no connexion whatever with the treatise of Plato. The subjects discussed in them are totally different. In the first literal portion of the commentary just mentioned, the poet makes an extensive, tedious display of science; he pours out all his knowledge on astronomy, astrology, and theology. Here Aristotle, whom he calls "the master of human reason," is his constant guide. He quotes the Arabs and the fathers of the Church. He discusses the immortality of the soul. In short, he accumulates the most incoherent offsprings of imagination, however slight and indirect may be their relations with the ideas, allusions, and expressions of this Canzone. However, so far, nothing in all this interferes with the real object of the poem; no cloud arises from it, to darken the clear historical object; its poetical sentiments are unalloyed by this mass of scientific details. Hitherto, nothing would justify our supposition that Dante had any other motive but that which resulted from his moral state—the struggle alluded to, that was existing in his heart. The poetical idea is by no means subordinate to the problem of a science both complex and enigmatic, and the well-founded objections that could be raised must be confined to the bad taste, affectation, and pedantism of such a combination. But, with reference to the allegorical portion and to the symbolic intentions of the Convito, it is positive that the poet attached a greater importance to the work, taken in this point of view, than to its historical interpretation;

he most expressly designates the allegorical exposition of his love ditties as the true one (*vera*), and nothing can be clearer than his explanations on the subject. Leaving, therefore, the real, to enter the allegorical sphere—it seems that the noble lady who had diverted the thoughts of Dante from the image of Beatrice—this lady whom he depicts as courteous, affable, with eyes full of love, and condemning to sigh whoever dares to gaze on her—this lady is no human being, but Philosophy, the queen of the universe, who has so fascinated the poet, that he cannot turn his eyes away. The allegory is explained with a great number of various reasons, which it would be useless, and not easy, to enumerate. A multiplicity of vague, and often incoherent definitions are introduced, of no great interest, although it would be easy to extract from the whole a good collection of expressive axioms and profound thoughts, bearing the stamp of Dante's genius.

If we take the first verse of the first Canzone commented upon—*Voi che intendendo, il terzo ciel movete*—we find it addressed to the spirits, or angels of the planet Venus, or of Love; all of which were classical beings in the poetical creed of those times. In the literal portion of his commentary, Dante speaks of them as real beings; and the planet Venus is the subject he selects for a most extensive display of his astrological and astronomical knowledge. But as he takes the heavens and planets as real substances, he must, in the allegorical interpretation, find other substances, or objects, of which the former are only the symbols. And this he

fulfils, by assuming that heaven in general, is science in general—science abstract and undivided. The nine heavens of the ancients, without excepting the highest of all, the empyrean, are the various branches of science. Consequently, certain mysterious analogies exist between the seven planets and the principal branches of science, according to which the latter are represented by the former. The corresponding scale is as follows:—The Moon is the symbolic planet of grammar; Mercury, of dialectics; Venus, of rhetoric; the Sun, of arithmetic; Mars, of music; Jupiter, of geometry; and Saturn, of astronomy. Above those seven planetary heavens exist the three other heavens, viz. the starred heaven, the crystalline and the empyrean, which represent the three sciences above those named, and which are: physics and metaphysics united, moral philosophy, and lastly, theology, the science of sciences.

The most curious portion of the Convito is the reason assigned, or explanations given, for these symbols; nothing could be more subtle or imaginative; thus it is demonstrated, for instance, that the planet Jupiter is the symbol of geometry, because Jupiter moves between two heavens contrary to its moderate temperament—namely, between the hot heaven of Mars, and the cold heaven of Saturn, besides which, this planet is of a silvery white. In the same way, geometry rolls upon two extremes equally repugnant to it; namely, between the point and the circle—the point being indivisible, and the circle in the impossibility of being squared, both cannot be measured; they are, therefore, repugnant to

the object of geometry. As to the colours, geometry is white also, as it excludes all the blots of error. It seems very plausible, from this brief example, that no confusion could be made, between the reality of the Canzoni, and the symbolic labours of the commentaries. The scientific reveries, can most easily be separated from the tender impressions developed in the poems; there seems to be no doubt that, when he composed the Canzoni, he never dreamt of annexing to them, such a fantastical erudition, and that his only object was to exhibit the powers of his subtle genius, and the variety of his acquirements.

The Convito, therefore, is not a pure fiction; it is, as we have seen, a combination of the real and of the symbolic, a striking combination of poetical inspirations with science, the former being subordinate to the latter, presenting a singular effort towards the unity of intelligence, tending to soften the scientific and speculative enthusiasm. Passions and yearnings were fermenting in the soul of Dante, which could not be controlled by any abstract or speculative tendency; they kindled his poetical genius, and then it soared above the petty influences of science in its infancy. No doubt his genius occasionally yields to those influences, and then he indulges in allegory. But, on the whole, the insinuation that his poetry *in toto* is a continuous allegory, a sort of riddle which science alone can solve, is a well-established impossibility; it is an inadmissible allegorical assertion in itself. The study of Dante's life and poetry leaves the impression that he must be believed

when he says of himself that which is simple, probable, natural, and true. He alludes to it in the twenty-fourth canto of the Purgatory, when a poet of his time, whom he meets there, tells him :—

"I see how thy pen has frankly assisted the dictates of love, which ours has certainly not been able to do; and whoever will search with as much subtleness as possible, will find no difference but that one between the two styles."

This statement introduced in the Purgatory is a clear explanation of the intentions of the poet. It cannot be denied that in some of his compositions, there are instances of a contrary system; but never in his higher poetry has he had recourse to an exclusive system of symbols. Far from it; he depicts men and deeds with a degree of reality and individuality, which repels most absolutely any allegorical interpretation. It is evident, that in his loftier poetical conceptions, Dante throws aside his philosophy and theology, and that from this fact, especially, sprang his sublimity. On the other hand, it is impossible that the vain theories of his age, on the relations of science with poetry, should not have penetrated his works, and they cannot, and ought not, to be overlooked, although they have not the importance which has been assigned to them. The foibles of Dante in this respect, however—very secondary—have given rise to critical aberrations, which have disfigured his noblest poetical ideas, by reducing them to common-place allegories and symbols, more especially with the *Divina Commedia*, as it will be seen.

We must not omit a quotation from the Convito, evincing our statement that Dante was violent in words, but not in deeds. Speaking of nobility, he says: "If my adversary wished to object to me that, in all other things nobility means goodness of the thing, but that with reference to men, nobility means that there is no remembrance of their base extraction, one wishes to answer, not with words, but with the *knife*, to so great a *bestialita*." * * * *

Certainly, the argument of the knife is very unworthy of a man like Dante; it is the ebullition of a temper naturally irascible, embittered by adversity.

Boccaccio, speaking of the irritability of the poet, pretends that, in Romagna, the smallest boys speaking in a disparaging manner of the Ghibelline faction, excited in the Alighieri so violent a passion that, if continued, he would almost pick up stones to fling them at their heads; but Boccaccio often exaggerates, and his assertions must be received with great reserve.

One of the most important parts of the Convito is that in which the author treats of the various ages of life. He says, that the first age is the gate or way, through which we enter the good life, and this entrance must possess certain attributions which are procured by a beneficent nature, which never fails in necessary things, as we see nature gives leaves to the vine for the protection of its fruit; nature grants to those ages, four things necessary at the entrance of the *city of a righteous living;* the first, is obedience—the second, mildness—the third, *Vergogna*—the fourth, the elegance of the body. He then continues on

the duties and characteristics of adolescence, which on entering the deceitful forest of this life, could not find the right path, if those who have more experience do not point it out; and excellent, graceful precepts, abound on this subject. He treats of mildness in manners, with principles of forbearance in a way very incompatible with his observation, the use of the knife, that escaped him. No better moral precepts can exist than those of his analysis of the *Vergogna*, by which he understands three passions necessary to our righteous life, and not understood by the vulgar; they are pudor, reserve;—and by the third, *stupor*: he means, a sort of bewildered state of a mind beholding great and marvellous things — understanding them or feeling them in a certain manner, which, when they are great, inspire a sentiment of reverence to him who understands them, and when they are admissible, inspire the desire to know their cause and effects. After the dissertation on youth, follows that on old age. Dante establishes that adolescence continues till the age of twenty-five, that youth closes at forty-five, and mature or old age at sixty. What he calls the *senio*, are the years from sixty to the end of life. He understands by *senio*, therefore, extreme old age, decrepitude. Here again occur, admirable precepts in which Aristotle is often quoted: the noble soul of old age must be prudent, just, generous, prone to speak well for the advantage of others; then, man must open like a rose which can no more remain closed, and must spread the odour inherent in it;—old age must be just, in order that its judgments and its

authority may be a bright light and a law for others; it must be affable—must reason on that which is good, and listen to it with pleasure. The old man has in him a shadow of authority which causes him to listen better than any other age disposed to more activity; he must know more beautiful and better facts, due to the long experience of his life.

We cannot do better, to close our brief observations on the *Convito*, than quote the opinion of Count Balbo, on the work. It forms an excellent *résumé*, but not a favourable one; whilst Ozanam calls the Convito a beautiful book, and Bouterweck compares it to the most excellent philosophical treatises of antiquity. He says, as well as all the Italian biographers of Dante, that a knowledge of this fantastical work is important, with reference to the understanding of the *Divina Commedia*. However, we scarcely ever met, out of Italy, any admirer of the great poem, whether in the original, or in Cary's translation, or any other translation—who had read the Convito; and, whatever explanations may be found in it, aiding to the intelligence of the great Epic, the study of it would be a severe ordeal. We have endeavoured to bring forward the parts of it which seem most essential in this respect. This is Count Balbo's judgment:—

"On the whole, it is the weakest of the works of Dante; it is not a work of youth, like the *Vita Nuova*, and almost all his detached poems; it has two important objects, like the work on the *Eloquio Vulgari* and the work *de Monarchiâ*, which will be spoken of afterwards; it is not to be compared, in any way to the great poem. It was

the work of an unfortunate man, deprived of his peace of mind, and plunged in misery, in wretchedness, in doubts, and in the wrath of exile. He had recourse to study, he was searching the ways to it; he did not feel in a fit state to resume thoroughly the great work conceived in more propitious times; he returned to the thoughts, the pleasures of his youth; he applied to comment them, to explain them, to justify them, and add to them new ideas, which lay incomplete and accumulated in his vast intellect, and remaining oppressed by them, till he could relieve himself from them in a better manner. As he proceeded to attend to other works, he gave up that one, and he did right. The *Convito*, is a mere sketch abandoned by the author; but it is an important sketch, on account of the facts it contains for the intelligence of the life of Dante and of the *Divina Commedia*, which would not be understood without this explanation of the four ages of man. It is also useful to know what Dante meant by those allegories; they are of many sorts, and none of them ought to *destroy the literal sense.*"

The Italians, generally, do not seem to have appreciated the *Convito*. Picci is an exception. Wegele, the recent German historian of Dante, sees in it a profound political element, and the rough materials which appear chiselled and ennobled in the Divine Comedy. He calls the *Convito* a rich treasure, indispensable to the comprehension of the great poem, and concurs in the general belief, that, had it been completed, a mass of commentaries, misapprehensions, and acrimonies accumulated on the poet and the poem, could never have existed. Wegele's estimable

work is essentially historical and German, bearing no traces, however, of local researches, nor of the more recent Italian documents. His admiration for Dante conduces him to a conclusion which will not be easily admitted. He asserts that the great Florentine had nothing Roman nor Italian about him, but possessed a *Germanic nature*. We protest against this Teutonic pretension. We believe that Dante has been the teacher of his country—the founder of the literary unity of Italy—and has exercised a boundless influence on the general formation of the nation, because he is the highest expression, the loftiest representative of Italian passions, of Italian aspirations, and of Italian genius.

CHAPTER V.

Dante's Treatise of *de Vulgari Eloquio*.—Its philological importance; its poetical theory.—Object and character of the work.—State of the Tuscan factions.—Siege of Pistoia.—The Pope's intervention.—Fall of Pistoia.—The White-Ghibellin party reconstituted; its dispersion.—The Executor of the orders of the *Comune*.—Dante retires in the Lugiiniane.—The Malespinas.—The seven first Cantos of the *Divina Commedia*; their recovery.—Dante visits Verona.—Tragical end of Corso Donati.—Anecdote related by Mr. Troya and Count Balbo.—Dante's visit to Paris; his sojourn in that city.—The Germanic empire.—Revolution in the Swiss Cantons.—William Tell.—Murder of the Emperor Albert.—Election of Henry of Luxembourg.—State of Italy.—Exultation of Dante.—His Italian Epistle.—Arrival of the Emperor in Italy.—State of Florence.—Hopes of Dante.—Revolt of the Lombard cities.—Conduct of Dante.—His Wanderings.—His retirement at Porciano.—Composition of the *Purgatorio*.—His appearance at Genoa; his sudden departure.—Uguccione della Faggiola.—Arrival of the Emperor at Pisa.—It is celebrated with extraordinary splendour.—Position of Dante.

Boccaccio—who has made a mistake with reference to the date of the composition of the *de Vulgari Eloquio*, as demonstrated by the researches of Count Balbo—speaks of this treatise as a book in which Dante designed to teach the art of writing in verse, to whoever wished to listen to him; he adds that the work—originally intended to contain four books—has either never been completed, or half of it has been lost. And in truth, there are two books only existing of *de Vulgari Eloquio*; the others have never been seen. The first part of the treatise consists of an analytical dissertation on the Italian dialects; the second part, devoted to a theory of vulgar poetry, may be considered

as the first essay of Italian literature; and such a subject acquires greater importance and interest, being the work of Dante. The former portion, therefore, is a most curious philological study on the state of the Italian language at that period. The author explains with admirable sagacity the structure of that language after the collision between the languages of so many conquering tribes, and the remains of the Latin language. He specifies what must be understood by the vulgar tongue, and how it differs from the grammatical. He describes minutely the varieties of dialects spoken in the regions on the right and on the left of the Apennines, and the cities where they are spoken. Among those which he distinguishes, he names the Sicilian; after a political digression, and anathema on its sovereigns, he turns to the Tuscan—to which he awards but a moderate eulogium—then to the Genoese, of which he says, that if the people of Genoa lost the letter *z*, they must either become dumb, or seek for another language. Afterwards he comes to the idioms of Romagna, and those beyond the Po, to which he will not pause, nor to the Venetian; he gives some praises to Bologna, and to the verbose tendency of the Lombards. But Dante, in his philological peregrinations, does not meet with the Panthera he is searching. He commences new explorations, more learned and more extensive, and finally, he discovers that the vulgar language of Italy, the one which is *illustre, cardinale, &c.*, exists in all the cities, without belonging exclusively to any of them; it is the mother idiom, or head of the family, which

sows useful seeds, unroots venomous herbs. He wishes that this language of choice should only be used to celebrate the most beautiful advantages of the human condition: *health*, *love*, and *honesty*, which conduces to virtue.

But what does Dante mean by giving the epithet of *cardinal* to the vulgar language, derived from *cardo-inis?* He says that, as the *hinges* of a door are the point of support and of connexion to the whole system of the gateway, in the same way, a perfect language causes the populations who speak it, to think and act with measure and gravity. There is something strange in the *hinges* of a door being the symbol of a fundamental agency; nevertheless, it seems by no means novel, even in Dante's time. Servius, who lived in the fourth century, says, in his commentaries on Virgil, alluding to the winds Eurus and Zephyrus: *Isti sunt cardinales;* these winds are *cardinals.* It is in this sense that towards the fifth and sixth centuries of the Church are found the expressions, "Episcopi *cardinales*, archidiaconi *cardinales*," which have gradually given birth to the title of *cardinal.*

After having attained a conclusion, with respect to the existence of his illustrious vulgar language, namely—the literary dialect of Italy—Dante observes, with great truth, that in every country the literary idiom is chiefly created by the poets, from whom the prose writers receive it; but, that it does not follow that those who write in verse must all equally make use of the vulgar tongue. There is, in his opinion, a close harmony—a real sympathy—between expression and thought, nobleness and elegance of style

being more especially becoming to science and genius; and man supplies poetry with its most lofty subjects, according to the different faculties or souls that are in him. Every man has three forms of soul, he says: they are the vegetative, the animal, and the rational, or spiritual. The soul, when vegetative, aspires to the useful, or to self-preservation; when animal, to the agreeable and pleasurable; and when rational, to virtue; the first engenders martial bravery; the second, love purified and ennobled; the third, an enlightened government of the will—righteousness. And such are the great principles of human actions *bravery*, *love*, and *virtue*, which form the noblest subjects for poetry. The subject of poetry having been discussed, he comes to the form, or various styles—of which three are mentioned—the tragic, the comic, and the elegiac, each of which are taken in a sense totally different from the classical sense generally adopted. All those ideas certainly appear very vague and incomplete, but the latter portion of the treatise not existing may be one of the causes of this vagueness and unsatisfactory principles. Moreover, it is positive that these sketches of a poetical theory refer especially to Provençale poetry; the illustrations for the various poetical styles are taken from the troubadours; the pre-eminence attributed to the *canzone* is especially a Provençale idea. A certain confusion must also ensue from the strange connexion Dante establishes between his poetical rudiments and the philosophy of Aristotle. He dogmatically renders science one of the fundamental conditions of poetry, of the highest poetry, the *canzone*. Here again evidently the

same object occupies him especially, as observed in the *Convito*, namely, the display of his erudition, in the view to establish his fame, and impress favourably his countrymen. It was also a patriotic appeal in favour of the national tongue. He defends it with manly, warm eloquence, but in vain. He was not understood.

It has been suggested once or twice that the *de Vulgari Eloquio* was not written by Dante, although the best authorities entertain no doubt on the subject. Boccaccio, for instance, who may have erred in certain dates and with reference to the historical traditions, is most careful and accurate in all that refers to the principal facts of the poet's life. Moreover, in several parts of the work there are reminiscences of former writings—of the *Vita Nuova*, for instance —so delicate and precise, that they could not have been traced by a strange hand, nor conceived by another heart. The same genius, the same feelings, characterize it. It is the work of a wandering outcast, pining, suffering, but always active. The exiled, obliged to explore the different states of Italy, studies their languages, for he had said on a former occasion that the vernacular tongue must be founded. It is truly the lover of Beatrice who proclaims that virtue is the sole nobleness, but here it is the lover whose pangs and miseries have faded all the freshness, exaltation, *naïveté*, of the author of the *Vita Nuova*, his thoughts being forcibly directed towards worldly objects gave rise to the abundance of scientific disquisitions. Is it not probable, also, that he may have found a refuge in these varieties of studies, afterwards exploited, as we have seen? Before taking leave of this philo-

logical treatise, we must add that the Tuscans have not been satisfied with its observations on the Tuscan dialect. They wished for an unlimited eulogium, and Dante sagaciously noted several defects in the Tuscan tongue. In this respect, he has been spoken of, as if he were not the father of that very tongue; as if, in judging it, he was not judging his own self. There has been much of useless and puerile discussion wasted on this subject, for it is long after Dante that the Tuscan idiom attained its highest polish and celebrity. The language of the thirteenth century at Florence differs in many points from the modern Tuscan, and does not require such anomalous apologists. Count Balbo remarks that the treatise contains no insulting allusions to the Florentines, who have been too susceptible on the subject; and that, on the contrary, it breathes an ardent love for the whole of Italy, without any diminution of tenderness for Florence: "Dante," he says, "high-minded and manly in all his affections, could praise and love the foreign languages, the national tongue, and the provincial dialects. He knew how to love and praise at the same time, and also reprove with a loving heart, Italy, Tuscany, and Florence, namely, his nation, his province, his city, three varied modes of fatherland comprised with each others. Alfieri did not do so."

We have seen the progressive changes in Dante's mind with reference to the vernacular tongue. He eulogizes it in the *Vita Nuova*, alludes to it again in the *Convito*, and although he adopts the Latin language for the *de Vulgari Eloquio*, in order, most probably, that this philological and literary manifesto should be

understood by all—his predilections are most warm in favour of his native tongue; it is an evident symptom of his future resolution to adopt it for the great work over which he was brooding. We have seen what were the occupations of Dante during this interval of 1304 to April, 1307; he, at the same time, zealously attended to the education of his eldest son, Pietro,—perhaps, of the two eldest, Pietro and Jacopo,—who had joined him, and accompanied him in the frequent peregrinations, of which no precise account has been found. His name appears as a witness in some transaction, in a deed drawn at Padoua under the date of 27th August, 1306. Two or three months after he is found again among the Whites-Ghibellins; again he had joined that faction, ready to share its vicissitudes; and this circumstance necessarily requires us to return to its history since the failure of the *coup-de-main* on Florence.

Their disaster did not prevent the Whites-Ghibellins from prosecuting the war against the Blacks of Florence, who received assistance from those of Lucca, whilst the former were supported by the Ghibellins of Arezzo and the Whites of Pistoïa. They continued to be unfortunate in every encounter, without any great loss, however, as it was a war consisting chiefly of skirmishes, ambuscades, and petty attacks from castle to castle. But, on the 27th July, 1304, Pope Benedict XI. died. He had been the protector of the Whites-Ghibellins. The general rumour assigned his death to poison, and the dark deed was considered as the vindictive work of the rival faction. Clement V., who

succeeded him, transferred the Pontifical see at Avignon, from which city the Pope could not feel the same interest in the Tuscan affairs, nor possess the same means of intervention, in consequence of its distance.

The Blacks of Florence and Lucca, encouraged by this circumstance, resolved on striking a decisive blow. In the month of May, 1305, they besieged Pistoïa, then the only city of Tuscany in which the government was in the hands of the Whites. No sooner did Clement V. hear of this great aggression that he sent to Tuscany several legates with the mission to command the raising of the siege of Pistoïa, and to conciliate, if possible, the two factions. The legates came; they were not listened to, or lulled by promises and delays. The siege continued; the daily encounters assumed a degree of unusual ferocity; if a man came out of the city and was taken, his feet were cut off; if a woman, her nose was lopped off. In the meantime the Bolognese gave the example of an ignoble defection—they joined the Blacks. The Pope, hearing of the uselessness of his legates, sent a higher envoy, considered more skilful—Cardinal Orsini, with the title of *Piacer*. The cardinal was not more successful; the Blacks remained deaf; they pressed the siege, and Pistoïa, laid prostrate, without hopes, surrendered in April, 1306. The unfortunate city was dismantled, all its territory confiscated, was divided between Florence and Lucca; the very name of Whites, of which it had been the cradle, ceased to exist in the desolate city. The Cardinal withdrew to Bologna, from whence he was soon obliged to retire, in haste, in

consequence at the intrigues at Florence. He excommunicated all the Blacks and their cities, which measure again being without effect, he finally went to Arezzo, early in 1307, and there disposed everything to collect some forces and prepare to attack Florence. All the White-Ghibellins soon assembled round the cardinal, among whom Dante resumed his functions of adviser and leader. But how much the colour of the factions had changed! We now see a cardinal, with full power from the Pontiff, at the head of a Ghibellin army ready to attack the old city, so long the indomitable centre of the Guelfs. The new White-Ghibellin army was neither deficient in number or courage, but it was conducted so wretchedly—it was so miserably commanded and officered—to use an expression of our time—that it dwindled away in a few weeks. There was no unity, and consequently it dispersed and vanished without having done anything for either of the factions thus brought together by their common hatred of the Blacks. Dante again beheld with bitterness his hopes blighted; he turned away from his party and disappeared. Towards the end of 1307, we find him retired in the Luginiane, under the hospitable roof of the Marquis Morello Malespina.

It was during the imminent danger of the party then governing in Florence that was instituted the function of Executor of the Orders of the *Commune*, or of Justice, and adjoined to the Captain of the people and to the Podesta in order to give greater power of execution to the commands of the *signoria*. That function underwent several modifications at different periods,

but it was always required that this executor should also be a stranger to the city, of more than thirty-six years of age, and a Guelf. His duties only lasted six months; he swore to the *signoria* to enlighten her on all civil or criminal affairs, and received 3600 gold florins for the stipend of himself and of his suite, composed of a law doctor, one judge, three notaries, five messengers, four pages, thirty-one domestics, and fourteen horse-guards. Subsequently came the outrageous usage of secret denunciations, which were thrown into a chest (*tamburro*) placed at the door of the executor's house, and afterwards in many of the churches of Florence; hence is derived the Florentine word *tamburrare*, to denounce; the accused was said to be *tamburato*. These denunciations were chiefly directed against the great, the rich, the eminent men, for, the republican spirit of the time was jealous of every superiority. It is impossible not to be amazed in finding that this same Florentine people, in advance of all Europe in the discovery and progress of human knowledge, should have been so insensible to the perfecting and the dignity of individual life. Strange anomaly! —inexplicable blemishes in the midst of so much greatness and in reality so much liberty. In 1225, Louis VII. had already abolished serfdom in France, whilst the same measure was taken much later in republican Florence; the *signoria* took the same measure by a decree dated August, 1289. We have the same spectacle in our time, namely, the monarchies of Europe pronouncing the abolition of slavery, whilst the Republic of the United States continues to exult

in the existence and extension of the darkest opprobrium.

The family of the Malespinas, had long been divided in two or three branches, each of which had its chief. Franceschino had inherited in 1300, the whole of the Luginiane; he received Dante in his principality, bestowed upon him some favours, and during the family feud respecting this inheritance, claimed by his nephew Morello, he entrusted to Dante a mission of conciliation, in which the poet succeeded, since a peace was concluded under his auspices, between the various members of the Malespina family. Franceschino is an obscure personage, only remembered owing to his brief intercourse with Dante, but his nephew and successor, Morello, had acted an important part in the war between the Whites and the Blacks, and had rendered great services to the latter, as Captain General of the people of Lucca. His name is invested with a certain historical importance, independently of the attachment that Dante conceived for him. Morello Malespina therefore, had been a great auxiliary of the Blacks, the mortal foes of the poet; and the commencement of the latter's friendship may be considered as the first indication of the great change that was taking place in his political ideas towards this period. Morello had married a niece of the Pope Adrian V., a Genoese of the illustrious family of the Fieschis. This lady, celebrated for her beauty, received the poetical homages of Dante. A traditional literary refinement distinguished the family of the Malespinas. One of their ancestors had been a celebrated poet, in the

Provençal language, at the close of the twelfth century, and Marquis Morello, besides his individual taste and inclinations, was no doubt disposed to honour this traditional fame in welcoming to his court Dante and other exiled poets. Boccaccio places the recovery of the seven first cantos of the *Inferno*, during this sojourn of Dante in the Lunigiane; they were all that existed of the poem, and were considered as lost. Boccaccio puts the following words in the mouth of the poet, addressing his friend and protector, Morello: —"I believed that these papers had all been lost and destroyed with all the others, at the time that my house was plundered; I thought no more about them; but since it has pleased God that they should not be lost, and as they have just been sent back to me, I will use all I possess of faculties to resume the business, and continue the work, and do better if I can in doing otherwise." From these last words, it has been surmised that these cantos recovered must have been in Latin, as it was well known that the poet had been in the intention formerly of composing the poem in that language. Such a supposition is inadmissible; what Dante had written in Latin was but an imperfect sketch—three imperfect lines, of which two only have been preserved—written, as it appears, much before 1300; and neither himself nor his friends would have attached such an importance to a mere rough sketch, whilst it is well established that there were seven whole cantos recovered under the following circumstances.

From the very commencement of the triumph of the Blacks, under the French standard of

Charles de Valois, the members of the rival faction naturally foresaw that plunder and confiscation would follow; they hastened to conceal and secure in any way, whatever they possessed most valuable. At this disastrous moment Dante was not at Florence, he could not take such necessary precautions; but his wife Gemma acted in his stead. She sent to a safe locality several coffers containing many valuable objects, bundles of documents and writings, among which many by the hand of her husband. Those chests remained, as it were, forgotten; but, after about five years, Donna Gemma—who was then taking active steps for the recovery of her dowry out of her husband's confiscated property—found herself in need of some family papers, secured in the coffers in question. She entrusted the research of these papers to her agent, assisted by Andrea Poggi, Dante's nephew, whom we have mentioned. Poggi, in examining the mass of papers heaped together, perceived several portions in Dante's handwriting. He read them; he found some sonnets, *canzoni*, and came to a thicker assemblage of paper, the contents of which struck him more particularly; it contained the seven first cantos of the *Inferno*. He took it away, read it again, and over again, most attentively, and with admiration. Not being much versed himself in literary subjects, as well as diffident of his own impressions, he consulted, on the manuscripts of his uncle, one of the most distinguished poets and most enlightened men of Florence, Dino de Frescobaldi. This poet's reputation was one of those passing sunshines of popular favour; he was more esteemed for his

general knowledge, in the higher circles; his poems, however, which have never been printed, are often very superior to the productions of other poets of that age, who have received the honour of publication; but let it be to the eternal glory of Frescobaldi that he perused with enthusiasm the fragment entrusted to him by Poggi, showed it to other competent judges, who shared his feelings, and conceiving that it would be most deplorable for such an admirable composition not to be continued, he earnestly advised to send these cantos to Dante, and thus enable him to finish his mighty conception. His advice was followed. When it was known that the poet was with Morello Malespino, the cantos of the *Inferno* were sent to the Marquis, with prayers that he might use his influence, and induce the author to continue his work. Morello gladly listened to the suggestion; and the poet listened to the wish of his kind protector; then Dante returned to his *Divina Commedia*. Some of the earlier Italian biographers of Dante have expressed a doubt about the truth of this anecdote, and without very plausible reasons. It is twice mentioned by Boccaccio, who expressly affirms that he relates it such as he heard it many times from the lips of Poggi, who was his friend, and whom he loved to hear, as before observed, relating and repeating all he knew about his great uncle.

The manuscript of this part of the *Inferno* being thus restored to its author, Dante immediately devoted himself to its completion; it was terminated at the close of 1308. About two or three months before, the poet had paid a visit

to Verona, and returned to the Lunigiane. What were the motives of this visit, has remained problematic. The Blacks, masters of Florence, were turning against each other. Corso Donati—whom the Florentines had surnamed the *Baron*, in consequence of his pompous manners—devoured by an insatiable ambition, was endeavouring to extend his authority by every means possible, and giving rise to a mortal hostility. He seemed to bring a certain ostentation in braving all laws, human and divine. He was accused of having poisoned his first wife. On one occasion he had sent assassins to murder Cavalcanti, Dante's friend; and the noble poet very narrowly escaped, fortuitously, a tragical end. His own sister, terrified at his despotism, had taken refuge in a convent, and pronounced the sacred vows. Corso climbed over the walls of the convent church, carried off the poor victim from the foot of the altar, and forced her to marry Piosellino della Rosa. His crimes and audacity inspired the people with a mixture of aversion and terror for this terrible man, whom they called also, in trembling, the Catilina of Florence. In September, 1308, the tempest of hatred and vengeance broke out over his head. Within less than an hour he was accused, outraged, and condemned to exile. But the proud chief and his partisans raised barricades and defended themselves for some time; he was expecting some succour from Uguccione, Dante's gigantic friend, which, however, could not arrive in time to save him. When this circumstance became known, his party gradually abandoned him, whilst the people attacked him

with greater fury. Corso Donati defended himself valiantly, cut his way through the mass of his foes, and reached the open country. He was arrested soon after, however, by a party of enemies; and being determined not to be given up to the people, and escape its vengeance and cruelty, he violently thrust himself down from his horse, when one of the men who effected his arrest, killed him by striking his mouth and face with his lance. Thus ended the eventful career of Corso Donati, whom Macchiavelli considers one of the greatest citizens of the Republic, despite his intolerable pride. It may be remembered that he was related to Gemma. It is supposed that he had made efforts to protect her, as well as her children; and that at this period Dante was not without feeling some interest in his fate. Such a conjecture received additional strength by the fact that, Uguccione, so friendly to Dante, had become the son-in-law of Corso Donati, and thus connected to Gemma, the poet's wife. The *Inferno* was dedicated to this Uguccione della Faggiola, and not to one of the Veronese Princes of the Scala, as it was long supposed.

Mr. Troya relates a very interesting episode belonging to this period of Dante's life, which has been doubted without any plausible reasons by one or two German critics—but consecrated afterwards, and after conscientious investigations, by the authority of Count Balbo. At the commencement of the 14th century, the hermits of Saint Augustine, with their superior or prior, brother Hilarius (or Ilario) were located in a monastery situated on a mount near the mouth of

the majestic river the Macra, and the lovely shores of the Gulf of the Spezia. "Alighieri," says Mr. Troya, "was charmed by the beauty of the spot; as he knew that brother Hilarius was a friend of Uguccione, Dante went to the monastery without being known. Hilarius was standing at the door with the religious, when he saw a stranger entering the church. His face was furrowed by misfortune. Hilarius said to him: —'What do you wish?' 'Peace,' replied the stranger. Then taking him aside, Hilarius asked and heard the name of the unknown. 'You are then, him of whom fame speaks so much?' 'I am that man; at present I intend to go beyond the Alps, but not in such a manner that I may not leave some monument of myself to the Italians, in order that they may not quite lose all remembrance of the banished.' In speaking thus, the stranger drew a book from his bosom, and added: 'this is the first part of my poem; it is the *Cantica del Inferno*;' send it, I beg you, to Uguccione della Faggiola with a few details I am going to give you. Having thus spoken, Dante recited the three first verses of the Latin poem, alluded to before, and having explained to him the reasons for which the poem was written in the vulgar language, he begged him to write to Uguccione, that his tender friend Alighieri, after having well considered the whole of Italy, had only found three magnanimous men, to whom he wishes to dedicate the three parts of his poem. Uguccione was to receive the first, and if, some day he wished to collect them all three, he would hear of the two others, the one, Morello, Marquis of Malespina, and the second, Frederick, King of

Sicily. Having thus spoken, he took leave of brother Hilarius. The Monks were then, and are still at this day, the safest and the most respected messengers, and Dante had acted prudently in entrusting to Hilarius, the sending of his poem to Uguccione. It was not easy then, to communicate from the Lunigiane with Arezzo. At the end of 1308, Uguccione was at peace with the Blacks, however he may have felt disposed before this period. Alighieri, could not displease him, in revealing to him, even inopportunely, the sense of the various allegories under which he had thought necessary to hide some of his allusions, or some of his political hopes. Nevertheless, Dante intended to manifest several of his most secret thoughts, and not daring to write to a man who belonged, or pretended to belong, to the opposite party, he had recourse to brother Hilarius; the latter could satisfy him. A few days after, Dante began his journey to France."

Such is the narrative of Mr. Troya. The interesting document upon which it is founded, is the Latin letter of Brother Hilarius, addressed to Uguccione, in compliance with the request of the poet, and relating all the circumstances of his visit, such as they are above. This letter exists among the manuscripts of the Laurentian library; it bears traces in the writing, clearly indicating that it was copied before the time of Boccaccio; and it is also accompanied by several other pieces referring to Dante, evincing an intention of collecting together whatever could illustrate the life and writings of the poet. This letter has a great character of adherence to strict veracity, breathing a tender admiration, along with a spirit

denoting a personal contact with the tone and habits of Dante. It gives longer details expressive of the amazement of the hermit on finding that which seemed to him difficult and incredible, viz.:—to clothe so much science and genius with the vulgar language—so coarse a covering. Upon which, he adds the poet's reply,—that, in examining the condition of the present life, he saw that the songs of the most illustrious poets were despised, and consequently, the generous men who wrote thus in a better time, abandoned to his great grief, the liberal arts to the plebeians; and that, subsequently he laid down the small lyre with which he had provided himself, in order to prepare another suitable to the understanding of the moderns; concluding by the observation, that it is in vain one offers *eatable* food to those who cannot bear any other sustenance but milk. Mr. Troya—we have seen speaks of the departure of Dante for France, and it is at this period, the commencement of 1309—that he undertook this long journey. The fame of the University of Paris, attracted all the men of talent from every part of Europe; but, there is no doubt, that fragments of the *Inferno* were pretty generally known, and repeated at this time among all classes, although no one could venture to assert that those verses were precisely the same as we read them now. It was during his visit to Verona, just mentioned, that two women (probably ladies), beholding him, walking by, slowly, in a grave, pensive mood—one of them said to the other: "Do you see that man? he goes to hell when he likes, and returns here when it pleases him." "I do not wonder at it," replied

another, "his hair is so crisp, his complexion is so burnt!" Dante, hearing them, is said to have passed on, smiling. Here we could with propriety, enter into a brief analysis of the *Inferno*, with the observations it is our intention to venture upon, with reference to that far-famed poem. But, such a method would intercept the biographical narrative at this point of the poet's life; and again, therefore, when the other two parts of the poem came to light. We reserve for separate chapters our analysis of the *Divina Commedia*, as there seems to be more consistency in a continuous account of the adventures of Dante. Let us follow him to Paris.

Dante must have been well acquainted with the history and labours of the University of Paris, through his master Brunetto Latini. Many of its teachers were celebrated for their skill in expounding the scholasticism of the age. His yearning to reach this great centre of learning was very natural. He is believed to have visited the entervening cities,—Genoa, the *superba*,—afterwards Avignon and Lyons. There are no details in existence about this journey, although his sojourn in Paris is positive. Count Balbo alludes to what must have been the conflict of feelings and thoughts of the poet, on finding himself at Avignon, where was then reigning the Pontiff Clement V., the 197th Pope—he now exiled. He, the former ambassador of the Republic of Florence, found the sovereign of the Church of Rome in a similar banishment, the opinions and principles of both, the Pope and Dante—having undergone a complete change. Boccaccio states that the poet, having reached Paris, devoted him-

self chiefly to the study of philosophy and theology, not neglecting, in the meantime, the other branches of learning. He was soon distinguished among the students of scholasticism. He received the appellation of celebrated philosopher, and according to Mr. Troya, he was hailed with great friendship and admiration by all. He sustained argumentative thesis on every subject proposed, and replied triumphantly on all questions of theology as well as physics. One day, it is related, fourteen questions were laid down, upon which he was invited to give his advice, and he answered them all, separately. It has also been supposed that, having been received Bachelor of the University, he delivered public lectures as master and teacher. Nevertheless, the impressions left in Dante's mind, of his sojourn in Paris are by no means favourable; he subsequently exhaled sentiments of wrath against France; and it remains uncertain whether they arose from the pressure of the iron hand of poverty, or from his hatred to the King of France, whose brother had treacherously trampled under foot and ruined the unfortunate exiles of 1302. What privation he may have endured in the great city, cannot be known, but it may have happened that grim want sat its clutches on the proud, high souled outcast. Real poverty—judiciously observes Count Balbo (himself several years exiled by a despicable government)—real poverty, bitter to all, is much more so to those who have advanced in life without knowing it; it becomes more distressing still, in a rich, active city; but Dante, he adds, was in possession of the hopes of glory which dwells in powerful and

studious intellects. Dante, must also have been present in Paris during part of the celebrated trial of the Templars. It may not be impossible that the iniquitous atrocity of the proceedings—the cupidity of the odious regal figure of Philip le Bel, impressed him deeply. After his studious sojourn in Paris, it has been supposed—from the fragment of a letter addressed by Boccaccio to Petrarch—that he visited Oxford; this, however, is not sufficiently proved, nor a journey to Flanders, through England, although a Flemish description is found at the commencement of the fifteenth canto of the *Inferno*, which there would be no difficulty in supposing to have been inserted subsequently in one of the revisals of the poem. However it may be with these conjectures—whether he was in the Lunigiane or in Paris,—he no sooner heard of the great political events foreboded in Germany and Italy, than he prepared to bend his way towards Tuscany. Again, Italy was on the point of being the victim of her eternal vampire, the Teutonic Emperor. We must return to the history of those periodical invasions.

The Emperor Albert of Austria was assassinated by his nephew John, on the 1st of May, 1308. On the 1st of January of that year the confederates of the primitive rural cantons of Switzerland had proclaimed their freedom; the Austrians had fled before their honest rustic foes. Blazing fires on the Alpine summits, in the evening of that day, were the signals of the fall of the tyrants in every valley. To this successful explosion of an oppressed people, the romantic episode of William Tell is somewhat

interwoven, with great exaggeration, by the popular tradition. William Tell was merely one of the confederates of the Grutli, brought to the secret nightly meetings by his father-in-law, Walter Furst, one of the three chiefs. He was not the hero of the conspiracy; the arrow he sent into the breast of Gessler was an act of private vengeance; or, as Schiller represents it, the exercise of a natural right, but which endangered the success of the great explosion on the 1st of January, as he struck mortally the tyrant about three months before; and the deed, on the contrary, is believed to have created no small amount of alarm among the confederates. These events in Switzerland were of a nature, both poetically and politically, to make an impression on such a man as Dante. He must have soon become acquainted with them, for he was deeply interested in all that concerned the Germanic emperors; and it is very remarkable (almost mysterious) that nowhere in his life and writings, or in the popular traditions about his person, the slightest trace or notice of them can be found. The murder of the Emperor Albert, four months after he lost the Swiss cantons, lead to the revival of the hopes of the poet and of his party. On the 27th of November of the same year, Henry, Count of Luxembourg, was proclaimed King of the Romans, and Emperor of Germany. In the following year, the new Emperor declared solemnly to the Germanic States, assembled in August at Spire, his resolution to repair to Italy, with the view of being crowned, and of restoring order in the peninsula. Preparations were immediately commenced for

the execution of the project on the following year. Dante's hopes must have dawned from the very day of the election of Henry VII. But what must have been his exultation when the resolution of the Emperor became known to him? In Italy it created a general fermentation. It was sixty years since the Italians had not seen in their country a German prince, invested with title of emperor. Their factions had continued their feuds among themselves, without even thinking of an imperial intervention. The arrival of the Emperor, with a German army, was going to upset the balance of the factions, their motives and object. Now, the Ghibellins were preparing again to claim their privileges, sword in hand, and under the unfurled standard of the northern legions. The Guelfs, on the contrary, disposed themselves to the defence of their independence, conquered by them more than two centuries before, against the aggression of a foreign power. On both sides the impending events gave rise to an extraordinary activity and movement. Long before Henry had crossed the Alps, Italy was plunged into unspeakable agitation and expectations.

This is, no doubt, one of the most remarkable moments in the life of Dante. Whether he was then at Verona, at the court of the Scalas, or still in the Lunigiane, or hovering on the frontiers of Tuscany, is not of much import; the more important fact is, that, now he has attained the acmé of his new political principles. We now find him an ultra-Ghibellin. He proves himself such an enthusiastic Ghibellin that he scarcely finds in the treasures of his imagination,

expressions adequate to his sentiments, and to the prodigious fermentation of his ideas. His first production under the impression of his enthusiasm, was an Italian epistle addressed to all the sovereigns, dukes, marquises, &c., of Italy, as well as to all Italians, exhorting them to hail, with suitable honours, the new emperor, the approaching saviour. The whole of this letter is a compound of the most delirious strains, of a superabundance of metaphors, images, allegories, expressive of an excessively excited mind. His favourite, Virgil,—all classical reminiscences, are abandoned, apparently forgotten; they seemed to him insipidity and tameness for such an occasion; he ignores them, and takes a more disorderly flight, both in the expressions and reasonings, which, as it may be easily conjectured, defeated their object. This epistle, written in Italian, as we have said, and not primitively in Latin, as often asserted, did not inflame the people of Italy. The love of novelty among the multitude, the interests of factions, the ambitious views of many individuals, were the great sources of the agitation that preceded the arrival of Henry. A few sentences from this epistle will suffice to exemplify its character: "The new day commences to spread its light, showing towards the east the dawn which banishes the darkness of the long misery; heaven shines on its lips, and its placid splendour reassures the augurs of nations. We are going, therefore, to taste the expected delight; we who have sojourned so long in the desert. The sun of peace is going to rise, and justice, which no longer was spreading its light, torpified

as she was in the ways of retrogradation, is going to recover its green as soon as the splendour will appear. Those who are hungry and who wish to drink, will satiate themselves by the light of its rays, and those who rejoice in iniquities will be confounded by the face of him who shines." "'The Lion of the tribe of Judah' has lent a merciful ear to the groans of the universal prison." "Oh, Italy, be rejoiced in future! Italy, so worthy of compassion, and will soon be envied by the whole world, by the Sarrazins themselves; for, thy spouse, who is the joy of the age and the glory of thy people, the merciful Henry, the glorious Cæsar, is hastening to come to thy nuptials." "Rise before your king, O inhabitants of Italy. Restore to him not only obedience, but also the government. Do not only rise before him, but manifest your reverence at his aspect, you all who drink out of his fountains, who sail over his seas, who tread on the islands and the Alpine summits which belong to him, you all who only possess public things and private things in virtue of the bond of his law."

Henry VII. would have found it an arduous task to fulfil this splendid programme, even if he had been the greatest and most powerful of sovereigns. He was, on the contrary, a simple, credulous man. Mediocrity was his lot, although he certainly was actuated by the best intentions, and allowed himself thoughtlessly to be captivated by the antiquated illusions of right and prestige of the Roman empire. Villani has left an overdrawn picture of him, in his history, not corroborated by the more accurate

historians. The Germanic historians, also, and among them Menzel, especially influenced by their Teutonic and Guelfic tendencies, pass over the nullity and cruelties of Henry VII. with great indulgence. Thus well-intentioned, therefore, the Emperor was at Lausanne, in the summer of 1310, waiting for his troops being collected. He received deputations from several of the Italian cities, but none from Florence, where the government of the Black-Guelfs dreaded the return of the exiled faction. He expressed his feelings of regret, as he had sent ambassadors to the Florentines, as well as to the other states of Italy, in the most conciliating intentions. These ambassadors, introduced in the Council of the Republic, were harangued in the name of the *comune* with a mixture of pride and politeness, which left to the government the option of assuming afterwards a conduct in accordance with the one or the other tone of reception. In the meantime, the party of resistance gaining the ascendency, the Florentines prepared an army to resist the Emperor, and thought of fortifying the city. The Blacks evinced their fury by various acts of violence. King Robert of Naples, the rival of Henry, came to Florence, where he was received with great honours; he endeavoured to restore harmony among the citizens, exciting, at the same time, their hostile disposition towards the Emperor. The latter did not appear in Italy before the end of October (1810), having received a large sum of gold from the Pisans, which enabled him to proceed. He crossed the Mount Cenis, passed through Turin, and reached Milan.

So far, his progress was a triumph; received everywhere with satisfaction, he exercised a salutary authority, caused in every city the exiles to be recalled, and left in all of them an imperial vicar with supreme authority. All the little despots came to obtain the confirmation of their usurpation, all the old Ghibellin chiefs flocked round his banner, convinced now of soon recovering influence and property. Most of the cities of Lombardy and of the march of Verona sent submissive deputations. The Florentine exiles hastened also round their deliverer, and Dante, who had been the precursor of the *new saviour*, must have been among them. It is certain that he had an interview with Henry VII., the details of which are unknown. There is reason to believe that he urged to the Emperor the necessity of marching at once on Florence, after which, not disposed to remain drowned in the mass of courtiers, he withdrew—retired somewhere near the source of the Arno; and, in the delusion of an immediate return to Florence, he silently glided as near her territory as he dared to venture. Henry VII. was crowned at Milan in January, 1311 Ambassadors from every part of Italy were present, but none from Florence, nor from the cities leagued with her, among which Bologna and Padoua.

After the coronation, the imperial progress ceased to be triumphant, it became uncertain, tardy, and subsequently surrounded with danger. All the Guelfic cities of Italy were preparing to oppose the German prince, under the auspices of Robert of Naples. Henry assisted by Cane della Scala, took Vicenza from the Padonians, whilst

Venice sent him a sum to purchase valuable jewels for the crown, and thus gained his good graces; on this occasion, much attention it seems was paid to the manufacture of the crown and the throne, for the future coronation at Naples,—and Dante is believed to have spoken contemptuously of these puerilities. However, Florence, uneasy at the successful commencements of the Emperor, issued a decree which recalled many of the exiled White-Guelfs on their consenting to pay a fine. This condition roused the indignation of all the members of the faction, whilst the Florentine government, considering this a great concession, continued the preparations of defence. This measure of recall was a crafty expedient; it was intended to deprive Henry of many auxiliaries. The Black-Guelfs, who were in possession of the government at Florence, dreaded the return of the chiefs of the White faction in the city. Finally, Baldo d'Aguglione, being prior in the autumn—a personal enemy of Dante and others—passed in the Council a list of exceptions from the recall, of such individuals as were not good and true Guelfs. Dante was at the head of it, and no doubt that he was then exulting in hopes. This new confirmation of the former sentence of exile against him did not affect him much. He had learnt that the Emperor was on his way to Pisa. But Henry VII. had met with vigorous resistances on his way. The gold and intrigues of the Florentines had determined the defection of Lodi, Cremona, Brescia, and other cities; he had recourse to cruelties that added fresh fuel to the hatred of the Italians; and now this great pacificator, instead of a

splendid, glorious journey to Rome, became reduced to explore Lombardy sword in hand, in order to put down a succession of revolts. He spent six months in incessant warfare with the cities of Lombardy. He took easily Cremona, and treated the city with great cruelty; its walls were demolished, its freedom and privileges annulled, and an enormous contribution of gold was extorted from her, with extreme ferocity. Afterwards, he besieged Brescia, which he took also, but after great losses; then subdued Piacenza and Pavia. In all these cities he placed petty tyrants, or imperial vicars, who bought of him the right of oppressing them immeasurably. After these ignoble conquests, the Emperor proceeded to Genoa, where he embarked for Pisa, then devoted to the imperial cause.

When Dante heard in his solitude—near the source of the Arno—of the revolt of the Lombard cities, he became a prey to a deep gloom and febrile anxiety; his wish was that the Emperor should march at once on Tuscany and Florence, as the root and source of all the resistances and revolts. There exists a letter from him on this subject, addressed to Henry VII., dated 16th April, 1311, from the banks of the Arno, on the Tuscan soil. Ugo Foscolo believes this letter to have been written in July; it was originally in the Latin language, and there has been several Italian translations of it, especially those of Witte and Fraticelli. We do not consider it deserving much the importance attached to it; it abounds in pompous expressions, and classical allusions. Its object is of much higher import, and certainly is not to the

credit of the writer. Dante in this letter urges the Emperor to fall on Florence, with extreme violence of language. There can be no reasonable excuse, observes Mr. Balbo, thus to excite a foreign prince against one's native city. It seems that about this time, Dante, in a paroxysm of febrile resentment, wrote against the Florentines a virulent satire, now lost, but which Leonardo Aretino had under his eyes, when writing his history of Florence; he adds, that Dante, who hitherto had evinced great consideration when speaking of the members of the Florentine government, heaps upon them, in this diatribe, the most violent outrages. With reference to the letter to Henry VII., Mr. Troya believes that Dante's resentment and violence were very natural, that such a tone was a necessity of the times, whilst his celebrity, and the irrefragable evidence of his arguments, justified such a step. Mr. Troya adds, also, that a local tradition relates that the poet was a prisoner in the old castle of Porciano, when this letter was written. This Porciano is about five miles from the source of the Arno, and Mr. Troya's discovery of new details consists of the fact that Dante, coming from Parma, reached Porciano by a wild, mountainous path, and feeling happy to tread his native land again, he yielded to the gratification of dating a letter from Tuscany; and that, in consequence of his having given some offence to Count Guido, proprietor of Porciano, the poet was for some time detained a prisoner in the great tower, which to this very day is shown by the peasantry as having been a prison of the great poet. Nevertheless, the tradition

is somewhat confused. He may have found this tower a convenient abode; and the fact of his imprisonment is placed at a period when it was impossible, as positive documents attest his having been elsewhere at the time. During these political events, Dante, generally retired in solitude, was devoting his meditations on his Purgatory. It is supposed that even in Paris it occupied his thoughts, and most certainly on his return to Italy—especially in the tower of Porciano—the inhabitants of which are not forgotten in the poem, not having found among them by any means a cordial hospitality. The fourteenth canto is also associated with it, by a lively description of the course of the Arno, from its source to its mouth. The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth cantos, dwelling almost exclusively on Lombardy, it may be justly inferred that they were composed during this period of his exile, whilst an implacable war was raging in every one of its cities; and that thus they became a scene on which the poet gave a free course to his fury, indignation, and sorrow. During the Lombard war, the Emperor had summoned, among other Ghibellin chiefs, Uguccione della Faggiola, to pay him homage. Uguccione travelled from his castle to meet the Emperor at Genoa, where Dante also came to join his friend. But the poet made a brief appearance in Genoa; his arrival was hailed with great rejoicings and enthusiasm by the admirers of his verses. In the meantime, he was menaced by dark fermenting vengeances. Dante had placed in his Inferno Branco Doria, murderer of Michael Zanche: his fearful poetical genius had thus fixed into a

frozen lake a man still living, of the higher ranks of society, whom he plunged into hell; adding that he had a *devil* left in his body, which caused the dead man to be thought still living. And on this occasion he also violently attacked the Genoese. Now, this Branca Doria was at Genoa; his feelings can easily be conceived; several citizens associated with him in his vindictive object. Uguccione interposed with his authority, his mighty arm and fame. No doubt he hastened the departure of the poet. In March, 1312, the Emperor, as stated before, sailed for Pisa, where his arrival was celebrated with extraordinary splendour, and the most unbounded testimonies of devotedness, on the part of the primitive, pure Ghibellins, who manifested great misgivings about the loyalty of the Whites, or recently-converted partisans of the Empire, among whom stood, pre-eminently, Dante.

CHAPTER VI.

Dante's treatise of *De Monarchiâ*.—Count Balbo's dissertation on the work.—Character of the treatise.—The Emperor Henry VII.—Advance on Rome.—His coronation.—His march on Florence.—He retires from the city.—Conduct of Dante.—Death of the Emperor.—Its consequences.—Dante's epistles to the Cardinals.—His sojourn at Ravenna and Lucca.—Victorious expeditions of Uguccione.—His brilliant career.—He defeats the Florentines.—Dante at Lucca.—Gentucca.—Fall of Uguccione.—Castruccio Castracani.—Pacification of central Italy.—Florentine exiles recalled on certain conditions.—Dante among them.—His letters on the subject.—Conduct of the Florentine government.—Dante at Verona.—The family of the Scalas.—Can Grande.—His court and hospitality.—Dante's epistle to Can Grande.—His position at Verona.—His departure.—Anecdote related by Petrarch.—Wanderings of Dante.—His sojourn at Agubbio.—Bosone.—Dante's arrival at Ravenna.—His family.—His position.—His feelings and hopes expressed in the *Paradiso*.

WHILST the Emperor Henry VII. was slowly progressing in his Italian conquest, the whole Peninsula beheld the fierce revival of the Guelf and Ghibellin faction. The additional denominations of *Whites* and *Blacks* remained in the shade. Italy was apparently divided in two parties: the partisans of the Emperor, the Ghibellins, and his foes, now the Guelfs, who were chiefly understood to be the Anti-Imperial faction, without any other acceptation. According to many existing documents, it was at this period that Dante composed his treatise *De Monarchia*. On the other hand, M. Witte of Halle, possessor of the largest collection of documents on Dante, establishes its having been written before

he was a prior. It was written in Latin. The first Italian translation of it by Ficino appeared at the close of the fifteenth century. From the previous exposition we have had of the feelings and proceedings of Dante, the reader can easily preconceive, that this new production of his political genius and passions, is little more than an erudite tissue of sophisms tending to favour his own views. Count Balbo has characterized it with his usual calm impartiality; he says: "I wish I were permitted to give here the whole of the opuscule, *De Monarchia*, and that my readers had the patience to peruse it, I would not require any other means to prove the strange aberrations of the Ghibellin sects, and to show how a mind so lofty can be precipated, by a false point of departure, in this abyss; and how Dante was, nevertheless, retained by his natural moderation, and still more by his former thoughts—by his habits of youth and of birth formed to the respect of the Guelfic opinion. The *Monarchy* is not the finest of the works of Alighieri, but it is one of his most important productions with reference to history. The manifesto of the wisest Ghibellin of those times conveys a knowledge of the exaggerated ideas of the faction, and being written by Dante, this manifesto exhibits them in their more favourable and brilliant position. Therefore, if the ideas of Dante are false and bad, what must have been those of the Ghibellins, more ignorant and impassioned. If we cut off a mass of the Latin of the schools of 1300, the book presents one of the finest openings that could be wished, and laying down as a principle a truth, good to express at that time, which is still so in ours, and will ever

be more so: namely, that every writer must strain to augment the treasure of human knowledge, and therefore, treat only of useful arguments, not already treated. Dante establishes, moreover, another principle more wonderful in that age; namely: that every political speculation ought to have for its object the *usefulness* of the civilization of mankind, and the object of civilization ought to be the promoting the intellectual powers of the whole human race. In our time, when such matters are so much discussed, nothing more comprehensive and more precise has been said on this question. Unfortunately, the author afterwards loses his way . . . . . he flies from dream to dream. But mark here, one reserve; the author does not exclude municipal laws (and behold the Guelf, and the Italian citizen), he does exclude the different kingdoms, the customs derived from climates; but at the same time he forgets to say how it is possible to bring to concordance these two contrary existences. Finally, we see that if Dante was Ghibellin enough to extol so much the power of the empire, he was not so sufficiently to insist on the dependence of the Pope. Therefore, we confess him to be a Ghibellin, and even a lofty one; but we will not have him to be ranked among the most exaggerated. After all, in point of faction, three things must be distinguished: firstly, to pass as belonging to the faction; secondly, to belong to it truly; thirdly, to make profession of it. Dante was called a Ghibellin, perhaps, before having been so. He became one, and too much so, but he did not think it, and used to assure it was not the case."

The *De Monarchia* lays down as a fundamental principle, that, in the human whole, there are parts; that the parts which are kingdoms must recognize a principate, which is a monarchy, the monarchy possessing a prince. This prince is God. The more the human generation is one, the more it evinces a resemblance to God. For the mass of the world one master only, therefore, is required, not with the same laws, which would be anomalous and unsuitable. Among the strange suppositions introduced in the work, we find that the Roman people did not usurp, but assumed, with every reason and justice, the authority over mortals. Then follows a rapid sketch of Roman history. Beautiful quotations from Virgil abound. As well as in the *Inferno*, the Roman poet is the faithful companion of Dante. Singular contradictions appear in this treatise; for instance, he quotes Cicero and his *moriendum ei potius quam tyranni vultus aspiciendus fuit*, speaking of Cato, forgetting that his countrymen were combating for the expulsion of a tyrant, as well as the circle of his poem, in which those who have put an end to their own existence suffer a just punishment. Dante speaks here of the authority of the sovereign as emanating from God without any intermediary power, and afterwards, the sequel may fairly be interpreted as asserting, or rather insinuating, that the Roman Prince is in some things subject to the Pontiff—it seems to imply spiritually—whilst the whole temporal authority belongs exclusively to the imperial sceptre. Whatever may be the real sense of the passages in question in the *De Monarchia*, and the intention of Dante, it has

been in Italy a great subject of controversy whether the Alighieri limited the Pontifical power to a spiritual sway, not conceding any temporal sovereignty to the Pope, or whether he advocated both sovereignties on the head of the successor of St. Peter. We believe that arguments for both sides of the contest could possibly be deduced from the *De Monarchia*. Much argumentative discussion has been lavished on the subject, as well as on the ideas expounded respecting the imperial authority, with its history and attributes, all of which are void of interest and of any real importance.

Let us return to the Emperor. He did not remain at Pisa long, and advanced towards Rome, uncertain as to what awaited him in the Eternal City. He was surrounded by a great number of exiles, many of whom were under the impression of the grossest illusions. If groups of partisans collected round his person, the mass of enemies became daily more formidable. Although Dante's treatise of *De Monarchia* was circulating among the Guelfs through the medium of zealous friends, although the poet's admirers, under the auspices of Uguccione, with his military fame and Ghibellin zeal, advised and urged the reading of his powerful arguments, the political agitation continued to spread and augment in intensity. In the meantime Henry VII. was marching, as it were, protected by the manifesto of Alighieri. He found the road unimpeded to the very gates of Rome. He encamped on the *Monte Mario*, and beheld the Romans, headed by the Orsinis, prepared to defend their city. Henry being joined by

the Colonnas, his partisans and rivals of the Orsinis, attacked the *Ponte Molle* and the gate which conducts directly to St. Peter. He crossed the Tiber, took possession of one part of the city, and hopeless as to any further progress, he established himself on Mount Aventine. His object was to take possession of St. Peter, where Charlemagne had been crowned, but that part of the city was defended by Robert and his army, along with his Tuscan allies. The Emperor resolved to make one great effort. He advanced onwards; a sanguinary struggle ensued in every street, in every lane; he was on the point of attaining the bridge Santo Angelo, when a troop of Florentine Blacks, with Robert's archers, emerged from an ambuscade, assailed him with fury, and thrust him back with immense loss, says Villani, of men and of honour. He then determined to receive the imperial crown in the church of St. John of Latran, where the ceremony took place on the 1st of August, 1312. After a brief repose at Tivoli, Henry, with an army enfeebled by defeats as well as by the departure of the Bavarians, proceeded to Lodi and Arezzo, where he was received with great honours by the friends of the faithful Uguccione. Hence he suddenly turned on Florence. He appeared under the walls of that city on the following 19th of September, but his forces not being sufficient to form a regular siege, he concentrated them on one sole point, with the intention to await what would follow rather than to venture on any rash attempt. Florence had called to her assistance her allies. They

obeyed her summons in great masses, and flocked into the town. Henry did not listen to the representations of his generals, who advised him to withdraw. He remained, with the conviction that the Florentines, not having been able to keep their cavalry, would surrender.

During this partial blockade of their city, the Florentines displayed the singular former spirit of the Italian Republics; they conceived that they could not better testify their contempt for their enemy than in affecting in his presence all the security of a state of peace. They did not close the gates; they continued to send and receive merchandise; no work was suspended even for a day; on the contrary, greater activity was brought in the construction of the various edifices already commenced; the family of the Cocchi continued the building of a new palace, at night by torchlight. These chivalrous bravadoes succeeded, the more so as they were backed by forces very superior to those of the Emperor, who, having waited forty days for the submission of the Florentines, rased his camp, and withdrew, first to San Casciano, and afterwards to Poggibonzi, on the road to Sienna. Dante had not the bitter grief to behold Henry VII. retiring vanquished from Florence. He was not among the Florentine exiles, surrounding the Emperor, and expecting to enter their native city with him; his absence did not arise from a more moderate degree of anxious hope and confidence in the Imperial triumph; a nobler motive kept him away from the German camp. Whatever might be the ardour of his political feelings and his grievances against Florence, his heart re-

minded him that he was born there—that his ancestors were sleeping in her vaults; and, perhaps, feelings of gratitude and tenderness arose from the conviction that in no other city in the world he could have become what he was conscious of really being. However it may be, he considered that it would be a want of gratitude and respect to his noble city if he returned to it by force of arms, following a foreign army. Consequently—for these reasons—he kept aloof during the partial blockade of Florence, retired in some unknown solitude in Tuscany. The Emperor spent the winter at Poggibonzi, concocting and issuing sterile decrees against Florence. Among these unspeakable follies, there were decrees annulling the authority and privileges of the city, condemning the *comune* to an enormous fine, and condemning to perpetual exile more than six hundred citizens, many of whom never heard of it. In the meantime, Tuscany felt herself more than ever enabled to defy the Emperor, her strength and unity augmenting daily; the cities of Lombardy had again seized their arms and revolted, whilst the ascendency of the King of Naples, the most formidable foe of the Imperial cause, was extending over the Peninsula. Among the follies of Henry VII. at Poggibonzi, one sole rational measure was determined upon, more worthy a Germanic emperor, namely—an invasion of the kingdom of Naples. But his health had for some time been shattered; although feeble and languishing, he took his departure for the Neapolitan expedition on the 7th August, and expired on his way, at Buonconvento, a few miles beyond Sienna, on the 24th August, 1313. A world

of hope went to the grave with him. The next day all the allies separated, each to return to their city, there to await events and prepare themselves for defence.

The news of the death of the Emperor fell like a thunderbolt in the midst of the Ghibellin faction; but by none, probably, was the blow felt so acutely as by Dante. Lucas of Leyden, two centuries after, in one of his compositions, represents Dante in a paroxysm of despair, on learning the death of Henry—evidently a pure artistical fiction. The poor exiled poet, however, heart-stricken, had too much wisdom not to perceive that the imperial cause, therefore his own cause, was rapidly advancing to ruin. He found in this death of Henry VII., a serious subject of reflection. His enthusiastic ideas about the blessings of a Germanic sway over Italy had failed miserably in their practical adaptation. Not only had the Emperor proved impotent, in his real or supposed object of conferring lasting benefits on Italy; but on the contrary, by the force of events, he inflicted incalculable injury to the Italians, and became odious to them. His vicars, or petty tyrants, whom he had substituted to the popular magistracies of the Podestas, and to whom he had sold their imperial offices, excited an unlimited hatred. He had extorted large sums from the hostile cities, and ignominiously begged monetary gifts from the allied municipalities. The Marquis of Montferrat had purchased of him a privilege to establish a mint for false coins. He had disgraced himself by gratuitous acts of ferocity. In Tuscany, the country had been indiscriminately plundered, burnt, and

ravaged under his auspices. At the siege of Brescia, one of the chiefs of the besieged city having fallen into his hands, he ordered him to be quartered, and his limbs to be flung into the city. His political conduct was as insane as inhuman. After great professions of moderation and of pacific, conciliating intentions, he proved himself a vile despot, estranging from him even the cities the most favourably disposed, like Pisa. His death became the signal of extraordinary rejoicings in all the Guelfic cities. In some of them solemn processions of thanksgiving were held. At Padoua, every citizen had a new suit of clothes made, as a sign and proof of an extraordinarily joyful festival. Nevertheless, Dante, although resigned to the ruin of his hopes, remained partially blind to such facts and manifestations. Whatever may have been his reflections, and his inward struggles, his opinions and sentiments did not change; he remained an inveterate Ghibellin. According to some writers, a *canzone*, erroneously attributed to Cino da Pistoia, was composed by him: it deplores the death of Henry as a calamity for Italy, celebrates his virtues and wisdom, assigning the failure of his projects to the faults and crimes of the Italians. Is it possible that such a *canzone* emanated from the pen of Dante, after the events related? We cannot help doubting it.

Boccaccio relates, that immediately after the death of Henry VII., Dante crossed the Apennines and retired in Romagna. Another biographer expressly affirms that he went to Ravenna on the invitation of Guido Novello. The statement is very probable. Relations of

intimacy between the Polentani, and the exiled poet, had long been established, as we have seen. The visit of Dante, however, cannot have been of long duration. Towards the end of 1314, he is found at Lucca, under the protection of his friend Uguccione della Faggiola. A few months before, he had accomplished what we may call his last political act; it was a Latin epistle; it was addressed to the cardinals at Rome, exhorting them to elect an Italian Pope, in the place of Clement V., whose death had taken place on the 20th of April, 1314. With it, ends his public life; after it, his name disappears from every public document; he is no longer connected, in any way whatever, with events of national interest. Dante suspended his poetical labours, and composed this epistle, a manuscript of which is also in the Laurentian. This document does not possess much importance, excepting as one of the testimonies of Dante's respect for the pontifical see; it bears no trace of the exaggerated feelings of an ultra-Ghibellin, and expresses a wish to behold the Pope again in the Eternal City. He implores the cardinals to consider how Rome, now solitary and a widow, is deprived of both lights, the Pontiff and the Emperor; he exhorts them to vote unanimously, to combat for the spouse of Christ, for Rome, for Italy, for the city of all earthly travellers. It is no longer the language of a virulent Ghibellin, but of a Catholic, favourable to the Church, and regretting the absence of the pontifical authority, on the see of Rome. Although the epistle is also a political manifesto, the poet reveals himself, despite the evident intention of remaining

a plain, vigorous politician; and ever and anon, exquisite expressions, beautiful poetical ideas escape from his pen.

Dante, during his sojourn at Lucca, finished and revised his *Purgatorio;* completed, according to the researches of Mr. Troya, towards the end of 1314, or the commencement of 1315. His intimacy with Uguccione, so lasting, must be noted in its fidelity. A sympathy between the poet and the great Ghibellin general had soon existed, we have seen, on their first meeting. The intimacy became greater, during the expedition of Henry VII. in Italy, in which Uguccione appeared as one of the most ardent partisans of the Emperor, who appointed him his vicar at Genoa. At the death of the Emperor, Pisa finding herself in a critical position, and in the necessity of being commanded by an experienced general, invited Uguccione to this post. He hastened to Pisa, and by the ascendency of his fame and eloquence, persuaded her citizens to continue the war; he succoured them with his own privy purse. He took the field, and commenced a brilliant series of expeditions. This period is the most splendid of his military glory. In June, 1314, he took Lucca, and made himself absolute sovereign of it. In the meantime, King Robert, naturally the mortal foe of Uguccione, hated also the great chief's friend, Dante, who had dedicated to him his *Inferno*, many copies of which circulated in Naples, where it was read with avidity. Now, the *Purgatory*, which was circulated also immediately and extensively, contained injurious expressions against the house of France; and

Robert, who kept a vicar at Florence, was soliciting a new condemnation against the poet. The war left no time for these new proceedings. Uguccione, after a series of successful expeditions, encamped at Monte Catini, between Lucca and Pistoïa. His army amounted to twenty thousand foot, and two thousand five hundred horse, including his allies from Milan, Arezzo, and Verona; the Whites, exiled, formed a separate body, but Dante was not among them; his days of martial activity had long since passed away. Among the lieutenants of Uguccione, was the celebrated Castruccio Castracani. The Florentines had prepared to meet this formidable league; they were succoured by contingents from Bologna, Sienna, and Perugia; by the brother of the King of Naples, and were commanded by the Prince of Tarentum. They advanced towards the Ghibellin lines, and the terrible Uguccione, the Achilles and the Rinaldo of the day, routed them with great slaughter. This victory of Monte Catini (29th of August, 1315) was the zenith of his glory and military career. The Florentines, however, although feeling deeply the blow, did not give way to despondency; they repaired the disaster with their old republican energy. They launched a new decree of condemnation against the Ghibellins, in which Dante was not forgotten.

Dante remained at Lucca, exulting in the laurels accumulated by his glorious friend, from about 1314 to 1316. But the consequences of this sojourn are of greater import than its precise date. He was captivated by a Lucca lady, named *Gentucca;* he introduces her several

times in his Purgatorio, and in such a manner as to impress the reader with the conviction that she had made a profound impression on his imagination, profound enough to awaken in him afterwards feelings of contrition, for having profaned the memory of Beatrice. Mr. Troya alludes to a supposition that Dante was induced, by the gentle persuasions of this lady, to instil in Uguccione merciful feelings towards the vanquished. Such a humane intervention harmonises with the whole tenor of the poet's feminine ideal; it creates a just sympathy for the immortality he has thus bestowed upon Gentucca. The sunny episode of this lady, that cheered Dante at Lucca—the regal position of his protector, were soon blasted by the tempest of adversity. The fortune of Uguccione, however brilliant, was but a glittering, deceitful dream; it stood upon no basis whatever; it was rootless. Absolute power engenders suspicion and cruelty. He committed several acts of barbarism upon victims who were reported as having held disparaging discourses about his person; he had commenced a reign of terror, indulging in sensual excesses, and lulled by extreme confidence in the stability of his power. One of his sons was Podesta of Lucca, and seems to have followed the example of his father. In the meantime, Castruccio Castracani, the romantic hero of Macchiavelli, was daily gaining greater popular favour. Whether it was a snare or not, the Podesta sent him on an expedition in the Lunigiane; on his return, Castruccio was accused of theft and murder, and condemned to death. He was on the way to the place of execution,

when the populace rose indignant, delivered him, and proclaimed him their sovereign ; his enemies fled in every direction. Uguccione was at Pisa ; he had scarcely left that city to hasten and appease the storm at Lucca, than the Pisans broke out, stormed his palace, and expelled all his partisans. Uguccione, irreparably ruined, wandered at Modena, Montefeltro, finally sought refuge at Verona, where Can Grande employed him as general of his militia, and in whose service he died two years after.

What must have been again the bitter anguish of Dante on beholding the sudden tragical fall of one, to whom he felt bound by admiration, gratitude and affection! The poet, thus plunged at once in sorrow and absolute poverty, was also reduced to wander and seek a refuge ; soon after, no doubt encouraged by Uguccione, and through his medium, he also came to Verona, and shared with the old warrior, the munificent hospitality of Can Grande. After the wars and the expulsion of Uguccione, the cities of central Italy experienced great lassitude from their protracted tumultuous dissensions; and, in 1317, Pisa, Naples, Pistoïa, Florence, and nearly the whole of Tuscany, came to an understanding and signed a solemn peace, the Ghibellin cities waving or abandoning the imperial pretensions of suzerainty. Castruccio Castracani, alone, absolute master of Lucca, where the imperial element was very predominant, and confident in his own military capacity, did not accept the offers of the peaceful league, and remained faithful to the imperial eagle. It was during this year, 1317, probably on the occasion of this peace ; or, on the extraordinary celebration of the feast of St.

John, the greatest at Florence, that, the republic softened from her former stern implacability, evinced a disposition to recall a certain number of the exiled, on the condition of their submitting to the *offering*, and paying a small pecuniary contribution. This *offering* required the exile to constitute himself a prisoner,—then, on that solemn day, to present himself in the Cathedral, torch in hand, and there recommend himself to the mercy of the *comune*. Dante's friends and admirers had obtained that his name should be on the list prepared by the government; many Florentines of illustrious birth, had availed themselves of this decree, and submitted to the ordeal. These circumstances were immediately communicated to the poet, as the most fortunate event that could befall him; among the letters addressed to him, giving him the joyful news, one of them seems to have been from a relation, apparently an ecclesiastic or a religious. Dante's reply is justly very celebrated. It is not long since it was discovered, and published as he wrote it, in very indifferent Latin. It is brief, and, it has been alleged that the latter part of it, is wanting—that a portion has been lost. It seems doubtful, and we conceive it has every appearance of completeness. Such as it is, however, it certainly suffices. The immortal strains, that call forth the admiration of Dante's genius, are abundant. But this letter, unravels his whole soul, and without it, who could be cognizant, to what degree that soul was majestic and lofty—soaring above misfortunes and sorrows,—a soul of adamant, unsullied by poverty and the contact of the earthly turpitudes. This is the letter:

"In your letters which I have received with

the reverence and affection I owe you, I have seen with gratitude what interest you attach to my return to the fatherland. You have served me with a tenderness the more to be valued, as it is rare in exile to find friends. I reply to your letter, and if I do not do so in the manner which the pusillanimity of many would have accepted, I ask of you affectionately to judge me only after having examined my reasons.

"I find by letters from you, from our nephew and many other friends, that in virtue of a recent ordinance of the Florentine government, relating to the absolution of those who are proscribed, I can—on the condition of paying a certain sum of money and submitting myself to the ceremony of the Offering—return immediately to Florence.

"These propositions contain, O! father, two things ridiculous and irrational;—irrational, on the part of those who have expressed them, for your own letters, conceived with more propriety and wisdom, do not state anything of the kind.

"Is it generous to recall me to my country, on such conditions, after an exile of nearly three lustres? Is this what my innocence, manifest to all, deserves? Is this what is due to so much labour and fatigue, devoted to study? Away with the man, who, being familiarized with philosophy, would be induced, by a stupid baseness of heart, to submit as a culprit, to the ceremony of the Offering, as other infamous wretches have done! Away with the man who, accustomed to preach justice, and conscious of having been wronged, would come abjectly and bring his money to those who have injured him, treating them as his benefactors!

"No, father, this is not for me the way to return to my country. But if yourself or other friends have discovered, or if somebody subsequently discovers, some other means by which I may preserve my honour and fame untouched, I am ready to accept and hasten my return. If there is no other way to return to Florence than the one now open, I will not return to Florence.

"And what!—am I not able to contemplate the sun and the stars everywhere?—can I not everywhere devote myself to the delightful research of truth? Is it necessary for this for me to sully my fame, to go and degrade myself in the city of the Florentines? No, certainly not, even if I were in want of bread!"

Such was the magnificent reply of Dante! Such were his indomitable nobleness and dignity in exile. His conduct claims an eternal tribute of admiration. The republic of Florence did not pardon his proud rejection of the offer which was considered as a favour. The government was then in the hands of the King of Naples, who had delegated his authority to a certain Rinieri. This Rinieri replied to the poet by a new decree, confirming all the previous sentences of exile pronounced against him, and particularly, insultingly, the sentence of 1302, accusing him of *baratteria*. Dante must have expected this vengeance, and was not probably much surprised when it reached him. His proud refusal may also have been expected by the heartless men who were at the head of affairs at Florence, who by no means, perhaps, wished to see the poet with his glory return among them, but, at the same time, felt the

necessity of certain concessions, to the admiration of his fellow-citizens and of all Italy. No doubt the cruel proceedings of the Florentines festered in the heart of Dante; but his wrath did not eliminate his tenderness; from this day he saw that death in exile awaited him; the struggle between resentment and love continued in his breast until the extreme twilight of his melancholy existence, when passionate tenderness arose in him, pure from the alloying mixture, and exercised then greater ravages in his soul. We now see him retired in deep gloom at Verona,—there continuing his *Paradiso*,—exclusively devoted to study. He had bid adieu to the world and to hope; his genius was destined to burn a few years more for the completion of his *Divina Commedia*, in which he has consecrated his errors, his injustices, and drowned them in splendid streams of eloquence, science, and fire; in which also he has accumulated imperishable treasures of invention and morality.

We must pause a moment before this munificent Court of Verona, where both the hero and the poet found a refuge.

Alberto della Scala, Lord or Captain of Verona, who died in 1301, had left three sons, who succeeded him one after the other, Bartolomeo, Alboino, and Cane. Dante had, it may be remembered, experienced formerly the hospitality of the two first; at that time the younger brother, Can Francesco, was young and obscure; no intimacy was then formed between him and the poet. It was only at the time of the expedition of Henry VII. in Lombardy, that young Cane had an opportunity of revealing his high capacity. His

brother Alboino associated him to the government, and both obtained from Henry the title of imperial vicars for the cities under their sway. At the death of Alboino in 1311, Can Francesco found himself sole master of the city and district of Verona, and immediately gave vent to his insatiable ambition. He waged a war of extermination to all the neighbouring republics, especially to Padoua, the most powerful and the most democratical of all; he subdued them all, and extended his kingdom from Trevisa to Montefeltro, in Romagna. He was recognized as the head and chief of the Ghibellin party in upper Italy; the surname of *Grande* was conferred upon him by the public voice. Bravery and great political skill were far from being the sole distinguishing qualities of Can Grande; he was highly endowed with those chivalrous virtues that are compatible with ambition and pride; he was courteous, magnanimous, and munificently liberal. Dante, bestowing in his *Paradiso* high eulogiums on the disdain of Can Grande for hardships and wealth, was merely the poetical echo of the popular fame of his host. He put no bounds in his eagerness to lavish his treasures on whoever had need of them. His court was the most brilliant in Italy, and one of his favourite objects was to render it a refuge, agreeable for the proscribed from all countries, more especially for those who were distinguished in any department whatever. Pancirola has left an account of the court at Verona; he wrote from the testimony of one of the Gazadi da Reggio, an historian of the fourteenth century, who had long been banished,

and who, having been hospitably received by Can Grande, had witnessed everything he relates. A few extracts from this document will give an idea of that sumptuous hospitality :

"There were lodgings appropriated to the men of every profession, funds destined to provide abundantly for their entire maintenance, domestics attached to the service of each individual. Over the doors of the various apartments had been painted symbols and emblems relating to the pursuit of those who were to inhabit them. For the warriors there were trophies; the figure of Hope had been painted over the doors of the exiles; bowers of the muses over those of the poets; the image of Mercury over those of the artists; the Paradise over those of the ecclesiastics; and so on, for all professions. The lodgings appropriated to each were in the same way adorned with analogous pictures. The repasts were alternately cheered by the concerts of musicians, and by the various games of buffoons and jugglers." "There were magnificent halls lined with tentings, on which were painted with an admirable skill, histories recalling to memory all the variations of fortune." "Cane," continues this same Pancirola, "sometimes invited at his own table the most distinguished among his guests, and the two he invited the most were Gherardo da Castello, surnamed the simple Lombard, owing to his frankness, and Dante Alighieri, a personage then very celebrated, and with whose genius he was charmed."

There is every reason to believe that Dante met with a generous reception at Verona. It is certain also that the composition of his *Paradiso*

was far advanced at this period, and that he continued to be absorbed by it. It has been suggested that it might have been terminated during this sojourn at Verona, because of a long epistle, in Latin (the authority of which, however, has been doubted), addressed by Dante to Can Grande, and presenting every appearance of a dedication of the *Paradiso*, containing, moreover, a sort of analysis of that poem. Certainly the dedication and analysis would indicate the termination of the poem, for an author does not dedicate an unfinished work; nevertheless, it will be seen later, that the *Paradiso* was not finished at this period. The Latin epistle in question is evidently the offspring of a warm and sincere effusion of gratitude; it abounds in expressions of the highest admiration for Can Grande, containing also singular poetical notions, resulting from a forced combination of anomalous ideas, a sort of theory which, fortunately, the poet ignored and forgot absolutely, when, in the flights and ecstacies of composition, he was overpowered by his emotions, carried off by his genius.

This epistle commences with exaggerated praises of Can Grande, and allegorical expressions, defending friendships in unequal ranks, great disparity not preventing even friendship of God and man. Dante seeks afterwards, among the gifts it is in his power to offer, that which would be most suitable, and he has thought of the sublime *cantica* of Paradise, which he offers, dedicates, recommends, to the protection of Cane. He then enters in some details on the poem, observing that it possesses two senses, the first, literal, and the second, *allegorical* or moral.

He gives the title of the whole work, and says, *Incipit Comedia Dantis Allaghèrii, Florentini natione, non moribus;* then follows his explanation why he has entitled it *Commedia,* and elucidations, more or less clear, of the various propositions announced in the first canto of the *Paradiso.* His allegories are frequently obscure, and mixed with quotations from the Bible, with mysterious allusions, often unintelligible. Again, he frequently quotes Plato, very familiar to him, we have seen, and to all the philosophers of the middle ages, through Porphyrus and St. Augustine. Finally, he excuses himself for not having been able to recall precisely what he has seen in the Paradise, and closes his incomplete explanations by an affecting allusion to his poverty,—*Urget enim me rei familiaris angustia.*

From the few words that have been said descriptive of the motley court of the Prince of Verona, we may plausibly infer that it could not be very genial for a nature like that of Dante. Solitude is a more welcome and happy atmosphere for an active genius; he had constantly sought it in the various circumstances of his life What must have been his position in the midst of this court crowded with exiles, refugees, friends, foes, artisans, buffoons? Was it possible for him, in this confusion, to bend himself to the necessary intercourse of this variety of characters assembled from every sphere of society? He, so grave, reflective, didactic, must often have been revolted by odious puerilities—disgusted by the spectacle of courtly servilities. Princes have never been remarkable by their esteem and respect for inde-

pendence and pride on the part of their dependants; it was no more in the power of Can Grande to honour the lofty, unbending gravity and freedom of thought of the poet, than in Dante to be obsequious—blandishing, for whoever it might be on earth. The prince and the poet, on a closer contact, probed each other; a coolness ensued, and it ended by the latter rejecting the hospitable yoke of the former. Petrarch who spent the latter years of his life in a part of Italy abounding with reminiscences of Dante, heard many current original anecdotes on this subject, and mentions one very illustrative of the position of the great Florentine outcast at the court of Verona and the motives of his rupture. "Dante Alighieri, my countryman," says Petrarch, "was a man very eminent in the vulgar (vernacular) eloquence, but of a temper too petulant and too free in his discourses for being agreeable to the sight and delicate ears of the princes of our time. Having been exiled from his country, he retired at Can Grande's, who was then the consolation and the refuge of all the unfortunate. He was at first very honourably treated; but he was not long in keeping himself aloof, and more and more so, and to become less agreeable to his patron. There were, at the same time, at this court, jugglers, buffoons of every sort, among whom there was one, who was the more prized, as it usually happens, as he was more impudent, obscene in words and deeds. Can Grande, suspecting easily, that Dante, did not much relish the valuable buffoon, had the latter brought before him, and having passed a magnificent encomium upon him, he turned towards Dante,

saying to him: "I am astonished that this buffoon, grossly ignorant and fool as he is, should be able, nevertheless, to please us all, and make himself beloved by us all, whilst you, reported to be so learned, cannot do as much." "You could by no means be wondering at this," replied Dante, "if you knew that friendship is based upon a similarity of manners and intellect."

It has also been supposed that the prince did not feel satisfied with the encomiums introduced by the poet in his verses; that he considered himself entitled to a greater exaltation of his deeds, and of his munificence. Dante's faithful friend, moreover, Uguccione, was no longer at Verona; his duties detained him at Vicenza, and it left him more isolated. His intention, however, had evidently been to sojourn some length of time at Verona, as he solicited the function of magistrate of the city, and his solicitation, through some reason or other, could not be complied with immediately. He was then accompanied by his son Pietro, who subsequently returned to reside at Verona, where he became the stock of a Veronese family. When Dante left the court of Can Grande, he commenced a series of wanderings, which have been the object of minute and zealous researches on the part of his countrymen. The local traditions—sometimes explicit and irrefragable—testify his appearance in various parts of Italy. The castle of Gorganago is shown to this day, as having been visited by the poet; he sojourned some time, at the same period, in 1313, at Agubbio, in the Frioul, residence of Bosone de' Gabrielli, he then visited the abbey of the Camalduli, six

leagues from that city, the superior of which was Dante's friend. Very probably his visits to the abbey were mere excursions from Agubbio where it is supposed he helped Bosone in the education of his son. There exists a sonnet attributed to Dante, in which he eulogizes the progress of the youth. Bosone, lord or tyrant of Agubbio (tyrant in the Greek sense) was himself a poet. He deplored the death of Dante in very fair verses, and was the first commentator of his great poem; his son long after abridged and revised the work of the father; such was the ascendency and influence of genius over a princely family. At Agubbio (now Gubbio) the residence of Bosone, there is a large square building on the brow of a hill commanding the city, built at about the same period as the *Palazzo Vecchio* at Florence; it is now empty. The visitor of Gubbio is shewn, with great pride, an autograph sonnet of Dante addressed to Bosone; but it must evidently be apocryphal as it bears the inscription of *Danti a Bosone*, and the poet never could have written thus his name; there is no reason for it, and no instance of it. The description of the mountain, *il catria*, one of the culminating points of the Apennines—in the twenty-first canto of the *Paradiso*, corroborates the tradition of his residence in those districts. At the commencement of 1319, Dante visited Udine, whose prince, Pagano della Torre, patriarch of Aquilea, despite his grievances against the Ghibellins, received magnanimously the talented proscribed of all parties, and hailed the poet with a most courteous welcome. Dante remained at Udine a considerable portion of 1319. It is to

be lamented that the history of the Guelfs and of the Ghibellins, believed to have been written by him during this visit, has been irrevocably lost. The inhabitants of Tolmino, a large village, affirm that Dante often came to meditate in exploring their wild mountains; a grotto is shown, and a stone on which often sat the melancholy exile; it is called *la sedia di Dante.* The death of Uguccione, at the siege of Padoua, was a new source of sorrow to him; it blighted one of the warmest feelings of his heart. At the end of 1319 or beginning of 1320, he quitted Udine, wandered sometime without any determined project nearer his dear Florence; he thought of visiting Romagna, but he could not venture among a Guelfic population, where the fame of his Ghibellin ardour would have exposed him to insults or hostilities. It seems that, once more, he made his appearance at Verona, where, for the last time, his old tendency for controversy induced him to sustain publicly a thesis on fire and water. This visit of Dante at Verona, must have been of very short duration. It is not mentioned by several of the biographers, and is of little import. The pre-eminent and positive fact is, that not many weeks after his departure from Udine, Dante arrived at Ravenna.

It may be remembered that the poet had been in that city in 1313, immediately after the death of the Emperor, Henry VII., when the sympathies of the junior branch of the Polentani, the reigning family, could not perhaps manifest themselves very effectively. Now, Guido, father of Francesca di Rimini, was no more; his grandson, Guido Novello, was in possession of the sovereignty,

jointly with his cousin, Ostasio da Polenta. Both received Dante most cordially; Guido, especially, by his respect, sensibility, and admiration, won the poet's heart; they became united by the warmest friendship. One of his first cares was to collect his family, diminished by the ravages of time. His two younger sons had died of the plague, one when he was eight years old, the other twelve; Dona Gemmà, his wife, must also have succumbed; no mention is made of her after the year 1308, nor anything more has ever been found about his other children; they must have died very early. The silence of Dante on Gemma is similar to that which characterizes all his domestic ties: he has kept a religious silence on the whole family. He has said nothing of his father, of his mother, Bella, and of his children. It arose from a dignified reserve, and a discretion which did not permit confiding to the public whatever concerned his private interests. His two eldest sons, Jacopo and Pietro, now in the age of manhood, joined him at Ravenna with their sister Beatrice, then eighteen or nineteen years old. Several devoted friends came also to share with him the generous hospitality of Guido; among them, Dino di Pierini, a Florentine, who afterwards returned to Florence, where Boccaccio became acquainted with him, and learnt from him various details about the sojourn and last days of Dante at Ravenna. It was from him probably that Boccaccio heard the greater part of what he relates somewhat vaguely about a new school of poetry created by Dante at Ravenna. No trace of it is found in Italian literature, and, it no

doubt remained a private essay, or literary intercourse, void of influence and consequences. Dante felt anxious to testify his gratitude to his benefactor by any service it was in his power to render. The domination of the Polentani extending in various localities along the Adriatic, gave rise to frequent diplomatic communications with the republic of Venice. Dante was more than once selected by his friend Guido Novello to proceed to Venice with the dignity of negotiator, and it must have been gratifying to him to serve his benefactor in circumstances of that gravity. The court and city of Ravenna manifested their respect for him; he was surrounded by affectionate, enthusiastic admirers. Protected by a princely family, his children with him, devoted to the completion of the *Divina Commedia*, Dante was in a flourishing, enviable position for an exile; he had every reason to forget his ungrateful Florence, which banished him four times, whilst she was indulgent towards obscure, mean, ignorant men. But no! by the side of the pride and energy of his soul there dwelt the element of deep tenderness, which at the thought of the native land shook his frame with emotion—made him shed scalding tears. Poor Dante sought in vain, he found nothing out of his beloved fatherland, nothing that could make him forget Florence; oh, if he were only to be permitted to breathe his last within its walls! His yearning and hope to return to it never abandoned him totally, excepting in moods of anguish and despair. We have his affecting confession on the subject in a few lines which have been gratuitously misrepresented;

they have been supposed to imply a menace of a return to Florence in spite of the government, a palpable, gross error. When Dante wrote these lines there was not the slightest chance for him of ever returning to Florence without the authority of the *Comune;* it was impossible for him to think of re-entering his dear city otherwise. The violence of political ideas had melted away under the soft rays of the tender, loving element of his nature; his intentions on the subject are most precise and certain, and ought not to have been disfigured. The verses in question are the following three first *terzeti* of the twenty-fifth canto of the *Paradiso* :—

Se mai continga che il poema sacro,
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
Si che m'ha fatto per più annì macro,

Vinca la crudeltà, che fuor mi serra
Del bello ovile, ov'io dormii agnello
Nimico o' lupi, che gli danno guerra;

Con altra voce omai, con altro vello
Ristornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
Del mio battesmo prenderò il cappello.

If it ever happens that the poem to which heaven and earth have lent a hand, and which during many years has emaciated me,

Should subdue the cruelty which keeps me away from the fair fold where I slumbered when a lamb, a foe to the wolves which wage war to it;

With another voice then, with another fleece, I will return a poet; and on the founts of my baptism I will receive the crown.

With another fleece implies, "no longer with the garb of a citizen or magistrate, but the poet's

robe;" and the *crown*, alludes to the laurels with which the poets were honored. This poetical triumph of the crown was enthusiastically awarded to him, but too late; it came to adorn his lifeless brow; and two centuries later another lamentable glory of Italy, Tasso, received, when laid down in cold death, the same tardy homage. The laurel crown did adorn the pale, withered, brow of Dante,—but not on the banks of the Arno. We are approaching his last melancholy days. His friends had all fallen or died. On his death-bed, he must have anticipated the expulsion of Guido Novello, which took place soon after. Can Grande alone, remained in brilliant prosperity. In the midst of so much gloom, there were consoling gleams, viz.: his love for Florence, so intense, although in another sense he was a Cosmopolite,—that love, with the hope of his return, but above all, his unalterable faith in the political futurity and greatness of his country, which never abandoned him, to his last breath.

CHAPTER VII.

Testimonies of admiration received by Dante.—The poetical triumph.—Hopes of the poet.—His occupations.—His mission to Venice.—His return and death.—Description of his appearance and habits by Boccaccio—His passions—His greatness.—Sensation created in Italy by the death of Dante.—His own epitaph.—The mausoleum over his grave.—Its present state.—Florence repeatedly demands, and in vain, the ashes of her poet.—Honours paid to his memory by the republic.—Influence of Dante.—Michael Angelo.—Monument raised to Dante at Florence.—Portraits of Dante by Raphael and Giotto.—Intimacy between Giotto and Dante.—Posterity of the poet.—The commentaries attributed to his sons.—Dante's popularity at the time of his death.—Extension of his fame.—Letter of Petrarch.—Foundation of new professorships in Italy for the explanation of the *Divina Commedia*.—Intellectual state of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.—Editions of Dante's poem.—Renovation of his fame.—Gravina, Vico.—Critics and commentators in the nineteenth century.—Character of the genius of Dante.

AMONG the consolations that soothed the bitterness of exile, the enthusiastic testimonies of admiration which Dante received from various parts of Italy, could not be the least of them; they rekindled, no doubt, sparks of hope. His poetical fame was extending daily. John of Virgile, a celebrated poet of his time, addressed him, in a *carmen*, with the most delicate expressions of his veneration and tenderness. Dante replied to him by a Latin eclogue, in which it would seem, by one or two allusions, that the question of his return to Florence, and the possibility of a poetical triumph, were either revived, or had not been totally abandoned. He continued

a Latin correspondence with John of Virgile, in which the eulogiums on Guido—eulogiums extremely elegant, affectionate, and dictated by gratitude—constantly re-appear with new forms, new graces. With reference to the triumph just mentioned for the first time, a few words of explanation are necessary. It was a custom then frequent in Italy—in the republics, as well as the absolute sovereignties, to award to those men, eminently distinguished by their eloquence or their poetry, the honors of a poetical triumph and the crown of laurels. These honors and this crown had been offered to Dante on more than one occasion, and more especially, at Ravenna, by Guido Novello; and, in this offer, there was something novel and special, in his case, which greatly enhanced its value. Hitherto, these honors had only been conferred on erudite poets—who had written in Latin, on supposed continuators or successors of the classical antiquity. Dante was the first who was thought deserving of them, for being the author of a poem in the vernacular—the vulgar idiom. It was, therefore, the triumph of the Italian language, and of Italian literature; it was a new era for both, and the poet only delayed his coronation till his *Paradiso*, then nearly finished, should be completed to his satisfaction. To the certainty of his coronation, he now vaguely added—it has been seen—the hope of receiving that crown and those honors, in Florence—a fond hope, however faint, which clung to his heart. It was his dearest dream—his most vivid yearning. And, in truth, how sweet and glorious, with his ardent patriotism, to be proclaimed *the Poet* of *Italy*, on

the very spot where his eyes had first opened to light, where his soul had loved so deeply,—where his lips had uttered his first poetical inspirations! Dante could not banish the thought that his great poem, once completed, the Fiorentine government,—instigated by vanity and out of consideration for the public opinion of the whole of Italy, if by no other feelings, would soften down, call back her illustrious outcast, and confer on his withering brow that crown offered to him by other cities. If deceived in this, he certainly conceived as a last hopeful conjecture, that, in whatever city he might be crowned, the fame of such an honor could not fail to touch and move the members of the Florentine government, adding thus to his chance of being recalled.

Dante, whilst at Ravenna was not without being exposed to the manœuvres of parties, desirous to drag him again into the arena of political collisions; attempts were made to re-kindle in him the animosities of factions, but it was all in vain. He had bid adieu to all those tumultuous scenes and feelings; he lived as solitary as he possibly could. He completed—revised the *Paradiso*, and composed in *terze rime*, a paraphrase on various points of doctrine and prayers of the Christian religion; it is a very orthodox profession of faith which Count Balbo pronounces inferior to the *Divina Commedia*, in its versification; it is, nevertheless, highly interesting by the candour it breathes, the suavity of its expressions, and the singular manner in which the *Paradiso* is introduced, without any textual indication,—so deeply were the whole being and the imagination of the poet absorbed by his

ideal of the heavenly world. It was also at Ravenna that he composed or completed a paraphrase on the seven penitential psalms. It is a work of pious consolation—of resignation, appealing to the justice of God after having suffered from the iniquities of men, and interspersed with facts relating to his own life—its blemishes, and to his own occupations.

Dante was drawn from his religious meditations and poetical studies, by a mission entrusted to him. It seems that the Venitians had manifested some hostility towards Guido V., della Polenta. Villani says that the poet was sent in embassy to Venice by the sovereign of Ravenna. The latter was a very petty prince considering the formidable queen of the Adriatic. He therefore sent his friend, tenderly attached to him, to exercise the influence of his genius and fame, and adjust the difference. A letter bearing the date of Venice, full of gross invectives against the Venitians, was formerly attributed to Dante, but has been proved abundantly to be an imposture. The poet, therefore, actuated by a grateful affection—happy to serve the magnanimous Guido—proceeded to his mission ; its object is supposed to have been to secure peace, and form an alliance. He did not succeed. His absence was very short, and, scarcely returned to Ravenna, he laid on the bed of sickness—perhaps of mortal sorrow—and died on the 14th September, 1321.

Guido Novello had at heart to confer on the dead the homage that had been offered to the living. The obsequies of the poet were but a cold image of the poetical triumph. The body, richly clothed, crowned with laurels, was con-

veyed to its grave on a car magnificently adorned; a volume of the *Divina Commedia* laying open on its breast. He was interred in the cemetery of the church of the Minor Friars *Frati Minori*, with whose monastic robe, it seems, he had wished to die. Several authors have left a description of his person. Boccaccio must be the most accurate; no one had such opportunities to hear details on the appearance and manners of Dante. We give, therefore, a few extracts from his work. "Dante was of middle height, with a slight stoop when he attained a mature age. His demeanour was noble, with an expression of gentleness and benevolence. His face was long, his nose acquiline, the eyes rather large than small, the chin somewhat long, with the under lip projecting beyond the upper one; his complexion was dark; his beard and hair, thick, dark and curly. The expression of his physiognomy was that of thoughtfulness and melancholy. . . . In his public and domestic habits he was admirably reserved and modest, and more than any other, courteous and civil. He drank and ate little, and always at regular hours; at his meals he was contented with the necessary; he evinced no gormandizing tendency; he praised delicate dishes, and only took common food. Naturally taciturn and disposed to reveries, he spoke little unless he was addressed; absorbed as he was by his meditations, he did not always hear the questions which were addressed to him; his replies were becoming and polite. However, when the occasion required it, he was very eloquent, with a rapid and admirable pronunciation. He loved passionately the fine arts, even

those which—like painting—were not immediately connected with poetry. In his youth he had taken lessons of Cimabue, the last and the most celebrated of the painters who composed in what is called the Greek manner; he was afterwards very intimate with Giotto, the successor of Cimabue, whom he eclipsed, and the real creator of modern painting. Dante had even intimate relations with the celebrated singers and musicians of his time; being gifted with a fine voice, he sang agreeably, and was very disposed to sing; it was his favourite way of exhaling the emotion of his soul, more especially when they were of a gentle and happy nature."

Such was Dante! a resplendent example to his country, to humanity, presenting the spectacle of a triple existence; the first, that of pure, enthusiastic love; the second, of a fierce, political agitation; and the third, exclusively devoted to science, to poetry, to a noble, self-perfecting object. In each of these periods, there were days miserably sad, and others heavenly serene; and, although writhing inwardly, at times, during the first, and breathing an evanescent felicity during the others—still, there remained in that soul a region inaccessible to the political passions and affections of the heart—a sanctuary, as it were, in which dwelt, unalloyed, exclusive love and respect for absolute and complete truth. Such is the pre-eminent characteristic of the life and works of Dante; it is his indisputable title to rank among the very few immortal moralists of genius: his genius presenting the most harmonising, perfect unity in its component parts, namely, the three faculties, which, with due proportions, constitute it; they are: intel-

ligence, or the power of perception; imagination, engendering the ideal; and the will, enabling to realize. Dante, in the independence and pride of his genius, had not permitted any of his faculties to receive an exclusive, or separate culture; a system which, in the usual modes of education, weakens them, and severs them in their action; but he gave a free, simultaneous course to their development, to their mutual influence and working. We have seen him addressing a political manifesto of great wisdom and learning to princes and populations, insensible to the representations of their local advisers. The austere pursuits of science did not chill his delicate sense of the beauties of nature, nor his generous emotions, nor a credulous *naïveté*, blended with singular candour. In the accomplishment of his great poetical work, we beheld the philosopher, listening to his inspirations in meditative solitude, with a religious solemnity, clothing with the boldest images his reasonings and reminiscences. On other occasions, the scruples of his conscience induced him to annex a detailed, logical analysis, to the sonnets and ballads of his youthful imagination. At all times, his vigorous, vivid intellect, could bend itself to the necessities of duty and of circumstances, and return afterwards to its great, all-absorbing pursuit. His love for poetry and science had not the power to rivet him, so as to elude his duties to his country. His eloquence was heard in the Councils of the Republic, his blood ready to flow under her standards. Conscious of the superiority that God had implanted in his being, his ambition was to multiply himself, and sacrifice all to the

public good. We have seen his intense, purifying, hallowed love for Beatrice; friendship found him ever faithful and devoted. His melancholy brow became serene in the society of women and young men; then, especially, he charmed all by the grace of his manners and language. His temperance left unclouded a memory of iron. A rare presence of mind in grasping at every opportunity—however fugitive and unfavourable—of acquiring knowledge, had enabled him to add incessantly to his marvellous store, and make time yield to his will and intensity of purpose. Boccaccio relates that he was seen once, in the principal street of Sienna, reclining over a book, and that he remained impassible during the whole duration of a popular festival, unconscious of the surrounding revelry.

But Dante was a man; human nature is heir to frailties which betray its original destiny, and the providential decree respecting the human compound of good and evil, with their collision in this earthly ordeal, for the triumph of the former, and for eternal recompenses. The noblest qualities, the loftiest virtues of Dante were sometimes tarnished by their very excesses. During the civil dissensions of his time, his hatred of iniquity became a perfect frenzy, engendering implacability towards mere error, engendering a state of exasperation, which, says the tradition, led him to throw stones at people whom he heard calumniating his party. It has been seen that, in a philosophical and political discussion, anticipating the refuting objections of his adversaries, he wrote that it was not with arguments such brutal doctrines could be answered, but with the

knife. The ethereal figure of his Beatrice, the constant remembrance of her image, proved, no doubt, a protection against the foibles of his extreme sensibility. Still, it would be difficult to delineate with preciseness, or determine too minutely, the extent of his resistance, or of his abandonment to the seductions of female beauty; in his *Convito*, we have seen, are found traces of earthly affections, however transient, over which he vainly endeavoured to cast a veil of ingenious interpretations. Even the great object of his existence, viz., the acquirement of knowledge, the fairest refuge against worldly temptations, entangled him into snares against which the apostle guards us, "Knowledge puffeth up." The excess of that self-knowledge so constantly recommended by the wisdom of the ancients, is not void of dangers, it sometimes inclines great men to anticipate the admiration of posterity. In the life and works of Dante, there undoubtedly appears, ever and anon, traces of anxiety for his own glory, pre-occupations about honors unworthy of him, an unnecessary display of erudition engendering obscurity, a failing he alludes to in two or three parts of his great epic. But these blemishes in an existence so great and good have been washed away by the tears of Christian contrition. The penitent, self-perfecting poet, reveals himself in various parts of the *Purgatorio*; in one of his most exquisite, harrowing strains, he represents himself with his eyes cast down, like the child acknowledging his wrongs, thus confessing himself to future ages. Religion and religious duties

devoutly occupied the melancholy twilight that preceded his death; and all beyond this, remains the secret of a merciful Providence.

A transcendant genius is generally in advance of his time, and Dante was not understood by his cotemporaries. They did not comprehend the aspirations of the statesman and of the poet, nor the unity of his genius producing itself in his unique creation, the *Divina Commedia*; all his previous compositions being merely preludes to it. The great mass of his cotemporaries certainly relished his versification, but, it often threw them into inexplicable amazement; their astonishment found its expression in legends. The prophetic dream of Dante's mother was related with marvellous addenda; the reality of his travels in the realms of the dead was believed by many; the recovery of his poem when lost was attributed to a miracle; finally, it was affirmed and believed that several days after he had left this world he had reappeared, crowned with a luminous diadem. A just appreciation on the part of Italy has been the result of that intellectual development, and of the civilization over which her great poet has exercised a mighty influence, and it is now long since the whole peninsula proclaims Dante the "*Cantore della rettitudine e della religione l'amico délla patria e del vero, il poeta storico.*"

The death of Dante became in Romagna especially, and other parts of Italy, the signal for poetical lamentations. Giovani del Virgilio, who had loved him tenderly, sent an excellent Latin epitaph to be placed over the poet's grave, which was accordingly done, and on the other

side of the tomb was also placed this very indifferent epitaph, supposed to have been composed by Dante himself, and said to have been found among his papers, but which we do not believe sufficiently authentic, nor bearing any traces of the Latinism of Dante.

Jura monarchiæ, superos, phlegetonta lacusque
Lustrando cecini, voluerunt fata quousque.
Sed quia pars cessit melioribus hospita castris,
Auctoremque suum petiit felicior astris,
Hic claudor Dantes, patriis extorris ab oris,
Quem genuit parvi Florentia mater amoris.

I have sang the rights of monarchy; I have sang in exploring them, the abode of God, the phlegeton and the impure lakes, as long as destinies have permitted. But as the part of myself, which was only passing, returns to better fields, and happier, returned to his Maker, I, Dante, exiled from the regions of the fatherland, I am laid here, I, to whom Florence gave birth, a mother who experienced but a feeble love.

Guido was unable to raise to his illustrious friend the magnificent monument, the designs of which he had prepared. Epitaphs and laudatory stanzas had poured in from all quarters. Subsequently came the expulsion of the family of the Polentani, and the sway of Venice. Bernardo Bembo, Venetian pretor in 1483, found the remains of the poet neglected. He raised, at his own expense, a mausoleum in marble and a chapel, worthy of the immortal remains of so great a genius. Afterwards, when the Exarchate of Ravenna, passed under the authority of the Pontiff, Corsi, pontifical legate, in 1692, restored the Bembo monument. He had a stone added into the wall, near the sepulchre, on which was

carved a long inscription; and over it, a crown of laurel, between the leaves of which, were carved the words: *Virtuti et honori*, all of which, stone, wall, and inscription, have disappeared. Time, negligence, the movements of the soil, had nearly caused the total destruction of the monument, when Cardinal L. Valenti Gonzaga, Pontifical legate, and an enthusiastic admirer of Dante, raised in 1780, at his own expense, a mausoleum somewhat similar to the former one, consisting of a small square temple, covered by a semi-spherical cupola, with four medallions representing Virgil, Brunetto Latini, Can Grande and Guido della Polenta. It is still existing, in a degraded state. When we bent our way along the *Strada di Dante*, and reached, breathless, the corner where stands the so-called mausoleum of the poet, our heart sank on beholding the wretched cupola; nevertheless, soon after, absorbed by the contemplation of the spot where for five centuries have reposed the ashes of the man whose existence was so bitter, and whose fame is so boundless, we no longer perceived the miserableness of the edifice, nor the ignoble filth around; our soul, deeply moved by sentiments of tenderness and exalted admiration, only beheld the illustrious ashes of the martyr.

Florence, however, with a blush of shame, at her own cruel ingratitude, long claimed the remains of her poet. Ravenna refused to part with the memorial of her hospitality. The demand was renewed again and again, but in vain. In 1396, the Florentine government issued a decree purporting to raise a magnificent monument to Dante, in the cathedral, and requesting

again the restoration of his remains. The authorities of Ravenna remained deaf, and peremptorily rejected again the same prayers in 1429. In the meantime the Florentines manifested their enthusiasm and remorse in various ingenious modes. A bust of the poet was solemnly crowned, as in the twenty-fifth canto of the Paradise, he had expressed a wish of a poetical triumph in his native city. The houses of the Alighieris and that of Beatrice, became an object of tender admiration. They were adorned with inscriptions, often with flowers—and were pointed out by the people with pride and respect. The family vault of the poet was also embellished with sculptures and paintings. His picture was placed in the dome. Medals of every description were struck in his honour. The government of the republic founded a chair, in order that the Divine Comedy might be explained and opened to the general admiration of Tuscany. From that period, Dante, like Homer, became an inexhaustible source of the greatest conceptions, the inspirer of his countrymen, among whom, the greatest,—Michael Angelo—whose genius being inflamed by a kindred genius, became the Dante of sculpture, as well as of painting. It is with Michael Angelo especially, that art became deeply imbued with the spirit of Dante, which, from that day, has exercised over the imagination and intellect of the Florentines so powerful an influence, that their taste received from it the peculiar characteristics which distinguish them. Dante gave an object to their thought; Michael Angelo directed their taste, as a profound analogy existed between the genius of both. The artist invested with plastic forms, the thoughts, opinions and images

of the poet. They both are the representatives, —the expression of the whole of Florence, material and spiritual, body and soul, poetry and art. They both appear as the complement, one of the other, so much their originality, singularity and incoherence, spring from the same sources. Whilst the poet proves himself a great painter, the artist may certainly be considered as a great poet in the marvellous expansion of his conceptions, independently of his own beautiful poetry. The study of the Divine Comedy requires to be completed by that of the Last Judgment, and of the Florence of Michael Angelo.

In 1518, Michael Angelo urged Leo X., but in vain, again to make an effort for the recovery of the great mortal remains, offering to carve with his own hands the sepulchre of the poet. It was some time after, that he executed a series of sketches for a copy of the Divine Comedy, with the commentary of Landino. This invaluable treasure perished in a sea voyage between Leghorn and Civita Vecchia—the severest loss perhaps, that art has ever sustained, despite the beauty of Flaxman's interpretation. Florence never heard of any homage paid to her poet at Ravenna, without experiencing a feeling of pride mingled with real sorrow. She gradually abandoned all hope of ever recovering the longed-for remains. She exhausted entreaties and supplications; and, there is something affecting in the sincere, courageous perseverance which animated the Florentine nation, and induced the republic to renew incessantly her prayers, which, on one or two occasions, bore a character of menace. It is an homage intensely vivid—unexampled, perhaps

—lasting during a long succession of generations —a long expiation for the implacability formerly manifested towards the great exile. In 1805, Florence determined to raise a monument to the memory of her poet. Alfieri took an active part in the project. Large subscriptions were collected, but political events changed the destination of the fund; it became indispensable for the payment of a forced ruinous subsidy to France. Finally, in 1818, Florence made an attempt to accomplish what was called a great duty, and this time succeeded. Ricci executed the beautiful statue of Dante, placed in the centre of an allegorical group, on a splendid marble mausoleum. The monument was only completed in 1829, and, although bereft of the earthly ashes, it stands in the church of Santa Croce, in company with Macchiavelli, Michael Angelo, Galileo and Alfieri.

The most popular portrait of Dante is that painted by Raphael, under the auspices of Leo X. No researches, no pains were spared in order to obtain a faithful resemblance. Not many years ago a new portrait of Dante, by Giotto, was discovered in the chapel of the Podesta at Florence. It is a fresco of the deepest interest in consequence of the intimacy that existed between the poet and the artist. We have seen that they had known each other at Florence in their youth, and afterwards met again at Padoua. Giotto may also be considered as the creator of his art; it is true that Cimabue had already rejected the Greek form, and invested his figure with reality and life, and that his works exercised a great influence on the school which he formed,

and from which arose Giotto. The latter, however, is the regenerator of painting. It appears that under the roof of Giotto, the poet met with a cordial and affectionate hospitality It has been supposed that the artist received many sublime impulses and suggestions from the poet, and that, on the other hand, the gentle, tender nature of Giotto softened the flashes of violence of his friend. But this mutual influence has been exaggerated. For instance—the tradition insists that the frescoes of Giotto, in the celebrated chapel of the Arena at Padoua, express the ideas of Dante; it is even affirmed that the poet came purposely to communicate his inspirations, whilst a mere glance on these frescoes convince that, in their details, they have no trace of Dante's conceptions, with very few exceptions, such as the Bolga, and perhaps the representation of anger. The brothers Orcagna have exclusively copied Dante in their frescoes of the *Campo Santo*. of *Santa Maria Novella* and the church of *Tanta Croce*.

We have seen that Dante was joined by his children when at Ravenna. His eldest son Pietro died at Trevigi in 1364. He exercised the legal profession, and was honoured with the friendship of Petrarch; he had married Jacopa, whose family name is not known, and the male succession continued down to 1536, when the last, Pietro di Dante, left a daughter only, who in 1549, married Count Sarego of Verona, whose last descendant, the Countess Sarego Alighieri, an accomplished lady, was still living some twelve or fifteen years ago, in the old castle of Garganago, formerly inhabited by the great poet, and where she had collected a library of the best

and rarest editions of Dante's works. The name and race of Alighieri have died with her. The last of the male succession, raised in the chapel of San Fermo, at Verona, two monuments—to Pietro Alighieri, *Dante* III., a great scholar, and to Luigi, *Dante* IV., eminent jurisconsult. With reference to Jacopo, the second son, all that is known of him, consists of his being generally considered as the author of a commentary on the first part of the Divine Comedy; it is unpublished, and it may be seen in the Paris library of the rue Richelieu. This manuscript (No. 7765) has been repeatedly mentioned, but not much read. It was supposed—by Ozanam, for instance—that it might contain some valuable biographical details. We have perused it with great care, and have found nothing that refers to the life or person of the poet. We cannot say anything about the authenticity of that document; it is considered as genuine by many good judges, but, on the other hand, it is positive, that there exists, in the various great libraries of Europe, many copies manuscript, of the Divine Comedy, bearing the name of some Dante or other, which cannot be authentic, and we have heard the best bibliographers affirm that it is impossible to discern among them those which may be genuine. In the preface, however, of the above-mentioned manuscript, Jacopo, inheriting the paternal traditions, develops the moral intention of the poem, with the warmth of filial piety, breathing respect, admiration, and tenderness. He states that the work of his father is composed of three parts,—in the first of which, he considers vice, which he calls *Inferno*, the subject of the second part being

the passage from vice to virtue, which he names *Purgatorio*—to show the progressive transmutation of the soul—and the third and last being the one in which he beholds perfect men, he calls *Paradiso*, to express the greatness of their virtues and felicities, the poet thus progressing through all the figures which surround him, towards the end which he has proposed to himself. Such is the explanation, which the most ancient commentators have adopted. Jacopo was also a poet. Some of his verses are preserved in manuscript in the Vatican and at Florence. The other son, Pietro, was also supposed to have written a commentary in Latin on his father's poem, but Filelfo is the only biographer who mentions it, and the fact has ever remained doubtful. As to Dante's daughter, Beatrice, a world of angelic associations and details, are totally unknown. She must have soothed greatly the last days of the poet. She remained at Ravenna, devoted to a religious life, in the city where her father's ashes were deposited. A manuscript document of 1350, existing in the Chancellery of the Capitani or San Michele, bearing the title of *Libro dell' entrata ed uscita del* 1350, says, that the republic of Florence gave to Messer di Boccaccio ten florins of gold, for him to offer them to sister Beatrice, daughter of Dante Alighieri, nun in the convent of Oliva, at Ravenna.

The course of time, that inexorable annihilator of so many literary glories, has incessantly extended the éclat of Dante's fame. We have stated, that, during the successive appearance of the different parts of the Divine Comedy, the

vernacular language had no pretension to any of the honours due to literature and science. Italian poetry was a mere amusement, not considered as a serious occupation. Dante was therefore exposed to the lofty scorn of the literary aristocracy of his age. However, his verses proved so noble, so beautiful, that it was almost impossible for Italian ears to remain insensible to them. The Latinists themselves could not withhold their admiration. If we believe the traditions currently repeated during the period that followed the poet's demise, the great epic had been more favourably received by the people than by the higher educated classes. The tradition says that the artisans in the shops—the country people, sang detached portions of it, in the streets, on the roads, in the fields, as it had been the custom for the romances of chivalry, and that fragments of it were transformed into popular ditties. Many curious and amusing anecdotes on the subject were circulating in Florence at the close of the fourteenth century;—they have been collected by Franco Sachetti; they were generally believed; we have related one or two of them, still, their veracity and origin are doubtful. Even when the poetry of Dante is the most simple and *naïve*, it never assumes a popular tone; it never ceases to be grave, lofty—unfit for a popular destination, and, it is very difficult to believe that any of the people of Italy, have ever sang fragments of the *Divina Commedia*. On the other hand, the fact is so frequently affirmed, that it cannot well be justifiably rejected. Perhaps, the country people of Tuscany and the artisans of Florence were in a great dearth of cheerful, genial, popular songs, and,

mutilated fragments of their didactic poem, may have found their way among them.

However it may be, Dante's genius was idubitably early appreciated by the polished and cultivated classes of society. Their attention was first drawn to the great epic, not by its artistical and political merits, but by a very interested curiosity: the events thus poetically illustrated were of a very recent date; many of the individuals who had been mixed with them, were still living; those who were no more, were succeeded by their children. For all the cotemporaries of Dante, therefore, the *Divina Commedia*, offered irresistible attractions; they beheld in it, the picture of a living real world,—a satirical or eulogistic history, far more than the ideal representation of a supernatural realm; they were so absorbed by the interests and the passions of the times, that their imagination could not receive pure impressions from his epic strains. The work of art and imagination, became exclusively an object of admiration at a later period, when years had passed away, effacing all the local animosities as well as the personalities. Then, the ideas, the language, the forms of composition became a universal object of imitation; several poetical fictions now forgotten, appeared during the fourteenth century, as well as fantastical descriptions of hell, of human destiny, all of which were the offspring of the taste of the age. But the two men who were the first to express a profound, reflected admiration for Dante, were Petrarch and Boccaccio. The latter, especially, manifested a boundless enthusiasm; it is said that he copied the whole of the *Divina Commedia* with his own hand, and took a

pride in showing publicly this manuscript; and, fancying that his friend Petrarch did not share his enthusiastic admiration, he wrote to him on the subject, insinuating a reproach of jealousy and injustice. Boccaccio's letter has been lost, but Petrarch's reply has been preserved; the lover of Laura unravels with interesting details his feelings towards the lover of Beatrice. Petrarch repudiates the accusation of coolness and jealousy for the glory of the great Florentine, and explains his reason for having long delayed the reading of his poem; having formed the resolution of composing poems in the vernacular language, and aspiring at originality, he affirms that he thought it prudent not to expose himself to the influence of so powerful a genius as that of Dante, but that, as soon as the time came—when that precaution was no longer necessary, he read again and again his works, and ever with renewed delight. It is difficult to believe that Petrarch had not read Dante when he wrote his first Italian poems; for, it appears evident, as established by Fauriel, that he not only had read him, but studied him, and that, this study, on the contrary, induced him to attempt a similar style of composition. There is no intention of suspecting the honourable lover of Laura of imposture; it is merely a suggestion that there may have been a misapprehension some way or other—either an error, or a passage faithlessly transcribed.

The admiration manifested by Boccaccio and Petrarch,—themselves so highly revered—must have extended the fame of Dante, and no doubt contributed greatly to the excellent and novel

homage paid to him in their life time, viz.: the foundation of professorships for the elucidation and explanation of the *Divina Commedia*. Boccaccio filled the first, established at Florence; he occupied it to the end of his life; his successors were: Philip Villani, and Francesco Filelfo. Pisa soon followed the example of Florence; her first and most distinguished professor was Francesco da Buti. Bologna, ever faithful in her love and admiration for the Florentine poet, founded also a school where Benvenuto da Imola,—disciple of Boccaccio, author of a celebrated Latin commentary on the poem, and one of the most learned men of his time—lectured on Dante. Even the wily, uncouth sovereigns of Milan thought it a necessity of their time to imitate the learned municipalities of Tuscany. In 1398, Galeazzo Visconti, instituted at Piacenza a similar chair, and appointed Philip de Reggio to fill it; and those professorships were invested with a solemn, popular character, very characteristic of the genius of that epoch: the lectures were delivered in the churches—and as much as possible, on days of great Christian festivals—in presence of large crowds, pre-disposed by religious emotions to those of the higher didactic poetry. Besides those official and public institutions, the poem became spontaneously the object of solitary labours, of various investigations—commentaries and interpretations, all of which contributed to facilitate the study of Dante, and give an extraordinary extension to his fame. His life, written by Boccaccio, contributed also to the diffusion of that glory; the work, it may be easily imagined, was a public event, and was sought after with

great avidity. Although he has been accused of having given too easily credit to mere traditions, and of having dwelt too much on subjects of comparative futility, nevertheless, his biography is invaluable as a cotemporary document. All the subsequent biographies of Dante—those of Leonardo Aretino, of Filelfo and others, have taken him as a basis of their own work—despite their criticisms on his levity—and in reality they have not added many facts, nor criticisms to this first enthusiastic and graceful biographer.

The fifteenth century was to Italy an age of political and moral weakness. The long and violent contest between democracy and absolute sovereignty had ceased; the latter had triumphed, or was on the point of victory; and everywhere, under its pernicious influence, the energetic movements—the healthy vitality which characterized the deeds, and the great productions of the fourteenth century—received a paralysing check. The fifteenth century by no means abandoned literary culture; on the contrary, the taste for study and letters became more general, but it remained a stranger to originality and nationality. The intellectual activity took no flights whatever; it confined itself exclusively to the study of the ancient languages. It proved an exaggerated result of the classical *renaissance* effected by Boccaccio, Petrach, Aretino, Filelfo, and others. Whatever vernacular poets appeared during that age, were void of genius, and incapable of imitating, in any degree, the harmony of their predecessors. It was an age of pedantry, whose heralds considered the *Divina Commedia* as a tissue of

monastic trivialities, a book fit for cobblers and tailors. It was again a passing contest between the ancient languages and the Italian; but now the modern tongue had two antagonists instead of one, since the revival of Greek, and the Greek invasion after the fall of Constantinople. The Dante professorships were all suppressed gradually. The taste for classical erudition continued during the sixteenth century, but with great modifications; it ceased to blight the nationality and vitality of the vernacular literature; Italian poetry and Italian eloquence took the boldest flights; they developed and completed, magnificently, the various styles uncultivated or unknown in their literary realm. Now, the fame and works of Dante found themselves in a new world, in contact with new glories, new ideas, new creations. A novel literary theory, based upon Aristotle and Horace—opposed to the form and idea of Dante's poem—had arisen, under the auspices of the ancients; and it certainly contributed to purify and elevate Italian literature. This theory would inevitably be applied to Dante, and it is what took place in 1570. In that year a celebrated grammarian, Varchi, repudiated the classical theory, and placed Dante above Homer and Virgil; his assertion was considered as scandalous; it stupified the classicists, and called forth violent invectives against Dante and his poem. The contest continued, erudite and acrimonious on both sides, during about twenty years; ending, on the whole, favourably to Dante. It proved to the sensible world that Dante's poem, although not resembling in the least that of Homer and

Virgil, was, nevertheless, an unparalleled work of genius, and, it still extended his fame. Florence published, in 1595, a fine edition of the *Divina Commedia*, under the auspices of the Academia della Crusca, the first that was purged of all the MS. errors. Since that time, hundreds of editions have been published more or less correct. The Florence edition alluded to, was another homage to her Christian Homer. It is only just to say that the academicians of the Crusca followed the Aldine edition, the nineteenth of 1502; it could not, therefore, be so defective as reported. Mr. de Romanis has made very minute researches on the editions of the *Divina Commedia*, and still more so, the Vicomte de Batines, in his *Bibliografia Dantesca*.

But let us pause before that name, more and more glorious, and its destiny in the seventeenth century, an age of miserable affectation, age of the deepest corruption of taste, when hyperbolies, puns, and pastorals, were the great tests of genius. It is the period of the formation of the Academy of the Arcades, whose members took names of shepherds, dreaming a rural felicity; but it was soon deserted by superior intellects; a reaction ensued, and along with it, a return to the admiration of what is simple, noble, and true. A host, of restorers of a pure literary taste, contributed to a flourishing *renaissance* of the glory of Dante; among them, appears the precursor of Montesquieu, Gravina. In a little work on poetical theory, he dwells on Dante with originality and depth; he expresses his profound admiration for the greatness and the dignity of the subject he has selected, for the sublimity of

the invention, and the originality of the execution. Sometime after Gravina, Vico, another philosopher, with a Germanic intellect in a Neapolitan frame, contemplating the various periods of history, came to the conclusion that the middle ages were a period of barbarism similar to that which enveloped Greece, and that Dante was the Homer of this new barbarism; his deductions derived from a vast, original system of ideas, arrive at conclusions, respecting the genius of Dante, very analogous to those of Gravina. In the meantime other admirers of Dante, inspired by his genius, became illustrious by their poetical productions, among them, especially, A. de Varano, in whom men of the most divergent talents, found their ideal of the highest perfection of art. Alfieri and Monti both proclaimed themselves his disciples. The glory of Dante at the close of the eighteenth century seemed in its zenith, and in the impossibility of further extension; and nevertheless it has extended.

At all times the higher intellects honoured Dante's genius. Villani, Ficino, Jove, Gravina, Tiraboschi, all have bowed down before his superiority. The unanimous opinion has proclaimed him the doctor of divine truth, and the most learned, to whom no human things have escaped. The first verse of the epitaph of Giovani del Virgilio, "*Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers,*" has become a proverbial expression, characterizing comprehensively the philosophy of the great Florentine. But at no period has the *Divina Commedia* been studied with so much zeal and so universally as during

the first moiety of our nineteenth century. Commentaries, dissertations, philological researches, in short, every possible species of labour have been accumulated round the poem. The present King of Saxony has honoured royalty by his enthusiastic and profound studies of the *Divina Commedia*. Former annotations and speculations have been brought out of the dust and republished. A vast number of editions have been given of it in every part of the civilized world. There is not a literary professor's chair where it is not the pre-eminent object of study. Researches on the life and adventures of Dante have also been in Italy a favourite, ardent pursuit. The archives of the Italian cities have been ransacked, the least document where the name of the poet might be found, became an object of indefatigable, dusty labours, and not only on the part of professed *literati* and biographers, but with mere amateurs; dillettanti, patriots, with many of whom Dante and the *Divina Commedia* form the whole circle of erudition, as well as the exclusive object of their enthusiasm, of their fond study, and also the object of their pilgrimages; for the various localities reported by the tradition to have been visited by their Homer, are to the Italians what Stratford-upon-Avon is to the Anglo-Saxons; but with a profounder, greater intensity of feeling, since, in their associations, religion and liberty, those great agitators of the human soul, and of the passions, preponderate with nobleness and with an inextinguishable ardour.

In the midst of a variety of speculations, and of capricious interpretations, engendered by the enthusiasm for Dante, some of the enthusiasts dis-

covered in his poem the most eccentric germs. An Italian mathematician declared having found in the *Divina Commedia*, the idea of the system of the world; a young metaphysician proclaimed that he had found in it, the germ of the whole philosophy of Kant. Others have committed the error—easily refutable—of transferring on all the works of Dante, their enthusiasm for the great epic. Another great foible—that pretension of saying new things, miserable affectation of originality—has also engendered the strangest assertions on both the poet and the poem. Father Hardouin has displayed very superior paradoxical skill, finding in the poem a vast amount of things that an Italian of the fourteenth century, in his opinion, could not have written, he remained convinced that it had been composed in the fifteenth century, by a disciple of Wicclef. Even Ugo Foscolo, despite the sagacity of some of his criticisms, has seen in Dante a religious missionary, and in the poem, a poetical manifesto of some great reformation; and, later still,—a verbose commentator transforms the *Divina Commedia* into a monstrous heretical work; but we will have the occasion to refer to those aberrations, in our observations on Dante's orthodoxy.

Dante, therefore, has ascended step by step, towards the throne on which he now sits indisputably—and through all the revolutions and varieties of Italian taste. He now reigns over Italian poetry and Italian literature; he is now placed by the side of those venerable monuments of primitive poesy—real histories of the epochs they celebrate—and whose very defects are above the sphere of ordinary criticism. He is in

fecting the smallest details—and, withdrew from this monument, when it had grown sublime by its proportions and beauty, but having left in it, a whole world of art and science, of wrath and love, that had ennobled and harrowed his soul. It was a glorious victory of genius, thus to force an immense subject—elements floating in the thoughts of men for thousands of years—into one perfect resplendent unity. Such was the stamp of Dante's genius. His mission was not so much to introduce new ideas in the world; ideas were abounding disorderly, vague, buried or hidden in dark clouds. He collected them, plucked their beauties, and forced them to re-appear, having submitted them to his supreme inspirations of order and harmony. These ideas, along with his own mighty ones, became forcibly moulded and flexible to his will, through his omnipotent originality. It is the noblest privilege of man to rule over his own inward world—to subdue and regulate the tumultuous thoughts and sentiments that arise and battle within him; it is, we say, the supreme gift, bestowed upon man by his Creator. To create is a power belonging to God alone, but He has endowed great men, with the second characteristic stamp of His omnipotence, viz.: the supreme faculty of bringing unity in number and variety, and harmony in confusion.

full possession of all that is due to him. He soars high above common humanity; he appertains to the common of men by the subject borrowed, and leaves them down far behind him, by the inspiration, gift of God, and by his own energetic labours. Thus Michael Angelo takes the marble of the field—a rough stone—unnoticed by any human eye—he carves it, and his chisel gradually transforms it into a divine form. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries abounded with fabulous narratives—pious legends; they were pregnant with dramatic events, fearful passions. The poet made his appearance. His soul was early matured by study, warmed by tenderness and sorrow, treasuring the sacred fire of inspiration; from his very boyhood, his heart became agitated by a pure, unearthly love, urging him incessantly to accomplish something great. Hence his avidity in plunging into every science, every language; he ventured on distant voyages; in all he was fearless, ardently persevering; an inscrutable Providence, moreover, seemed to accumulate over his head, a combination of calamities, and sent to his lips a cup overflowing with every bitterness. However, his fatherland having rejected him, so noble a genius turned to higher broodings, instead of being profaned and withered by the petty municipal affairs of a city. Then, weary with earthly things, his broodings turned and rose towards eternity. He beheld this eternity with a traditional halo that had traversed ages and ages; he grasped it—he appropriated it to himself for the rest of his life; he realized it with his poetical chisel—fixed on its structure and outlines;—laboured during twenty years, per-

CHAPTER VIII.

Yearning of man, at different periods, to probe the mysteries of the future existence.—Originality of Dante.—Homer.—Shakspere.—Characteristics of the *Divina Commedia* and of the *Paradise Lost*.—Raphael's and Holbein's Madonnas.—Analysis of the *Inferno*.—Form of the Inferno.—Dante prepares for his pilgrimage.—Obstacles he meets with.—Appearance of Virgil.—His mission.—He consoles Dante.—His prophesy of a great deliverer.—Charon.—Emotion of Dante.—The first circle of Hell.—The second circle guarded by Minos.—Francesca of Rimini—Ugo Foscolo—Shakspere's Juliet.—The third circle, Cerberus.—The fourth circle, Plutus.—The fifth circle, the city of Dis, guarded by demons and furies.—Danger of the poets.—They are saved by a messenger from heaven.—The sixth circle. Farinata degli Uberti—Cavalcanti.—The seventh circle. Geryon.—The eighth circle. Episodes of serpents.—The ninth circle. Ugolino—his authropophagy.—Satan and the Demons.—Milton's Satan and demons compared with those of Dante.—Historical importance of the Inferno.—Character of its reminiscences of the mythology and traditions of the ancients.—Character of the influence of Virgil in the Inferno.—Religious unity of the poem.

THE sentiment of a future existence is the most natural to man. It is ever blended with the notion of good and evil—of vice and virtue, which, grafted on the idea of justice, has given birth to the universal creed of a dispensation of punishment and recompenses in the life that follows our brief earthly existence. An irresistible instinct teaches every man—in all ages—in all spheres, that our real being will survive the organs to which it is bound in this world; but, nothing is known about this mode of the future life.; no experience on the subject is permitted by Providence, and, we discover nothing positive

in the midst of the dark shades of the grave. The human mind has ever been disposed to probe the great mystery until it is solved by religious faith. In times of great disaster and of great misery, especially, the end of the world has been universally expressed and hailed as a final day of calmness for the sufferers—of punishment for the wicked—as the day of divine justice. During the thirteenth century arose again a general terror, foreboding the end of the world as close at hand, and along with it, the day of last judgment; since the year 1000, every century had experienced a similar paroxism of terror without any apparent motives, and more or less violent. A general thirst for a knowledge of something of the future life was prevailing generally, when Dante appeared and boldly proclaimed that he would explain and unravel those mysteries. We have alluded to the variety of materials in his possession which made him conceive the idea of erecting a monument that would strike the imagination by its boldness and astonish by its grandeur; these materials were to him, what the colours are to a painter, and the stones to an architect; they were common and inert, but he gave them a splendid and exquisite symmetry and enriched them with the loftiest ideas of his heart and mind, although ever and anon, they bear the traces of passions unworthy perhaps of the subject, all being the offspring of his ardent feelings and of the political fierceness of his time to which he fell a victim—source of all his misfortunes, which, however, led him to glory.

There is nothing in Italian literature that can

be compared to the Divine Comedy. It is necessary to seek in other ages, in other countries, the offsprings of genius that can be brought into a parallel with Dante's great poem. Homer and Shakspere are generally considered as the rivals of the Florentine, in the object and perfection of the varied and complete pictures of humanity, which are an imitation, not of any human work, but of the divine idea, the sole great element of creating poetry. They all three, in the spontaneous, free exercise of their genius, violate, at times, the laws of taste and of refinement, which especially characterize the secondary ages and secondary labours; their beauties and defects often reflect the character of their times. A genuine heroic spirit of poetry is manifest in the Greek bard; Shakspere is the great delineator of the human passions; he is the fountain-head of all that is great in dramatic literature, but he is void of any animating principles, either social, political, or religious. Dante, on the contrary, became a great poet, impelled by the noblest love that has ever existed on earth. With him, history is more exquisite than any work of art—reality more romantic than any romance, and truth more beautiful and harrowing than whatever could be invented by any imagination, whilst his human and patriotic object in constructing a monument, comprising and depicting the whole destiny of man—during and after this earthly life—is unrivalled; and will, perhaps, ever remain unequalled.

The chaste and majestic muse of Milton offers naturally many resemblances with the Italian bard; both boldly appropriated to

their object unearthly materials; but it must not be forgotten that the English poet came three centuries after the Florentine. The genius of both had been inflamed during the civil wars, and had beheld in the human passions that surrounded them, a human or earthly hell; and such a spectacle, undoubtedly inspired also to Milton some of the tumultuous scenes of his infernal regions. Dante, in being himself the eye witness and narrator of all he relates—having contemplated in person all the horrors of his *Inferno*—justified his indulging in a superabundance of details, which would be inadmissible in the *Paradise Lost*—as well as incompatible with the general plan and method of the English epic, whilst the Italian poem derives a palpitating interest from a multitude of details, all subjected, however, to the method of the poet, and to the unity of the poem. Milton's poem is a Biblical epic; it has also its source in a pure love of nature, which soared above the political chaos of its age; but its descriptions of nature, so sublime and pure, are as much inspired by the Bible and by Homer, as by the poet's own impressions. Dante, on the contrary, describes nature exclusively from what he has felt, seen, and experienced; hence the pre-eminent divergence between the two poems. The *Paradise Lost* reflects the evangelical sublimities—the pure virtues of the holy Scriptures; it is especially didatic. The *Divina Commedia* represents the passions, heroism, and history of the middle ages; it is, at the same time, a social and political code, reflecting the purest religious tenets of its age; hence, it combines the

characteristics of both Homer and Milton. With reference to Milton and Dante more especially, we must be permitted to characterize them with one of the deepest esthetical impressions we have ever experienced. When we beheld at Dresden Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto, and Holbein's Madonna—after the first effusions and emotions of love and admiration, reflections and associations naturally followed. The loftiest production of human genius in one sphere suggests naturally comparative contemplations of the human mind: our thoughts turned to Dante, as much as when listening to the supernatural strains of Mozart, near Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, in St. Peter's, and, we conceived Raphael's wonderful creation—that transfigured woman, whose gaze, melancholy and lovely, seems to look at once into the human soul and into eternity—with her expression more divine than human—to be the ideal, not only of human conceptions, but of Catholicism, an abstract of *all*; and Holbein's Madonna, with her benignity, her loving pity, exquisite suavity and simplicity, appeared to us the Protestant Madonna, representing primitive Christianity. The Divine Comedy is also—like Raphael's Madonna—the ideal of Catholicism, its expression in its highest glory; and the Paradise Lost the expression of Protestantism in its highest purity and noblest simplicity.

A mere perusal of the great drama of Dante suffices to impress the reader with admiration for its structure, its multiplicity of methodical details, and convince him also that all the efforts of the poet, tend incessantly to establish the pre-

eminence of the physical and material action of the poem, which constitutes the essential basis of every epic. To conceive the material form of the *Inferno*, the reader must imagine a vast pit or concavity, reaching from the surface of the earth to the centre, and divided into nine circles, gradually diminishing in circumference. An inverted cone would represent the exterior figure. Before the commencement of the circles, but within the gate of hell, is a dark valley running around the entrance of the infernal pit; it is the outskirt of hell, called the limbo, and is the abode of neutral, worthless beings, rejected alike of heaven and hell. The nine circles are severally destined to the punishment of crimes of a particular genus; and some of these circles are subdivided in gulfs or rounds, each appropriated to the different species of offences which the genus comprises; thus, the fourth circle is subdivided into four compartments, the eighth circle is divided into ten gulfs, and the ninth circle into four rounds, the last of which, being the very lowest point, or centre of the earth, is the dwelling of the archtraitor Lucifer. The circles, therefore, contain a graduated scale of punishment, contracted in their circumference, and sinking into a lower depth, and the greater is the crime, so is the circle allotted to its punishment lower. Each circle is under the guardianship of a giant demon, who is the emblem of the vice punished therein; and, as the reader descends from circle to circle, from layer to layer, down into the very centre of the globe, he meets with water, mud, sand, iron, granite, mineral and boiling springs, thick smoke,

of his mind and senses. The poet passes a night wandering in mortal anguish, and towards dawn, attains the limit which separates the physical world from the invisible world. The first sentiment experienced by man when thus suddenly transferred into a world of light and truth, is one of profound discouragement, of painful remorse, of convulsive sufferings; it is the struggle between the two elements of flesh and spirit: the immortal soul yearns, for the source of all happiness, beauty and knowledge; the conscience of man is laid bare, and all the human passions appear with their hideous brutal forms. The poet is assailed by a panther, a lion and a she-wolf; his distress and terror are unspeakable, but the voice of reason calls to him that with the aid of meditation and expiation, he will triumph over all, and raise himself to the very foot of the eternal throne. It is then that Virgil appears, not a symbolic or imaginary being, but the gentle, veritable soul of Publius Virgilius Maro. He emerges slowly from under ground in the dismal desert; his appearance has something chilling; his voice has grown faint from long disuse of speech; but, from his very first words the reader understands the celestial character of his mission, by his anxiety to offer consolations in the sweetest language ever uttered by mortals. Three blessed women protect in heaven the poor wandering poet; Beatrice, his lady-love, Mary, the Queen of Angels, and Lucia, the glorious martyr, his special patroness. The three beasts will be crushed by them, and Virgil, in order to restore confidence and hope in the heart of Dante, promises to Italy a hero, a saviour, a symbolic grey-

mephitic gases, secular vaults, subterraneous ruins, many of which testify the cataclysms anterior to the human species. In a scientific point of view, this wonderful progression of phenomena, does not appear to have been noticed by the commentators. The hypotheses of ice and fire in the centre of the earth were known to the poet, and he seems to have anticipated the two principal systems of modern geology.

Let us now follow the poet in his mysterious pilgrimage. He loftily declares himself the hero of his poem. This privilege, excusable in great men, becomes the source of a variety of original beauties. It was in the year 1300, when the great Jubilee had been proclaimed by Boniface VIII., and during the night from the 4th to the 5th of April, anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ, the night before Good Friday. The poet was at Rome at this time of the remission of sins, depressed by the remembrance of his wrongs, as well as the political agitations he had witnessed. He was in the midway of his life, and hoped, like the prophet, to descend to the gates of hell: *Egodixi: In dimidio dierum meorum vadam ad portas inferi.* Isa. xxxviii. The whole of his journey through the realms of the condemned, occupies two days. He subsequently takes four days to visit the purgatory, and one to explore the heavens. It was about midnight, and full moon. He was clothed in the Franciscan robe in which he died, with sandals at his feet, a cord round his waist, when suddenly he found himself lost in a gloomy forest, benumbed by a deep slumber

hound, who is to be hailed by the world, and by him to be delivered of all the evil passions that assail it. This mysterious deliverer is twice heralded in the poem, and has received a variety of interpretations. Mr. Troya has investigated the subject with great erudition; he concludes that, it cannot allude to any other but Uguccione, and by no means to either Can Grande or the Emperor of Germany. On the other hand; Mr. Carl Witte has clearly established that Uguccione could not be *Il Veltro*, as Troya wishes it. However, whether this great deliverer referred, either to a Ghibellin chief, or to a new Cæsar, he has never appeared yet; Italy remains still prostrate in her expectation, and the prophecy of the Eagle of Florence may become realized in our time. All doubts being thus dispelled—no ground for hesitation remaining,—Virgil, ever calm, paternal and prudent, enters first the abyss, and Dante, timid, anxious, eager, follows him, pausing again and again, to exhale his pitiful sorrow—leaning at times on a gravestone to sob; at other times, launching imprecations against men and cities.

The two poets, therefore, commence their pilgrimage. They first meet with the crowd of those who have lived in a state of apathy and indifference, a wretched flock, who, it may be said, never lived; they go on in nakedness, sorely stung by wasps and hornets, which bedew their cheeks with blood, that, mixed with tears and dropping to their feet, are there gathered by hideous worms. The austere guide passes by them with a few words of scorn; but soon after, rebellious spirits oppose the passage of the

two pilgrims. The spirit of darkness, in order to render himself visible to the eyes of a living being, assumes the form of Charon, for it is evident that with Dante as well as with the fathers of the church, the mythological personages are nothing more than disguises borrowed by the devil when he is intent on doing some injury or other to man. Hoary Charon orders the poet away, not having to deal with live righteous spirits, but with the dead, when Virgil adjures him in the name of God; the shaggy old man's head falls, humbled, while the crowd of spirits, faint and naked, gnashed their teeth and blasphemed as they heard the supreme words. Charon collects them, strikes them furiously with his oar, and the horror of the scene is such that even the gloomy region shakes trembling, the earth gives a blast, flames shoot forth; Dante, not yet inured to such emotions, feels his brow chilled, and falls back insensible. A clap of thunder awakes him, and he finds himself transported near the first circle, for, how could he have passed the river without being soiled by the contact of the wretched condemned? Virgil moves onwards, leading him—they behold in the first circle, or limbo, the multitude of souls which, although having lived virtuously, yet through lack of baptism do not merit Paradise; and, continuing to advance, they discover a luminous castle, possessed by those who have passed a glorious existence on earth. This resplendent dwelling is accessible by seven doors, which represent, it is said, the seven arts of the *trivium* and of the *quatrivium*. Within its precincts, intelligence has justly the

precedence over physical force; genius stands higher than courage, Aristotle is greater than Cæsar. Virgil introduces his disciple to the noble school of the poets of antiquity, at the head of which advances Homer, the bard sublime, *l'altissimo poeta*; he is followed by Horace, Ovid, and Lucan comes last. Dante relates that they received him with a kind salutation, and honoured him by making him one of their tribe, he being, he modestly says, the sixth amid the learned group. Then the poets, continuing their conversation, reach the foot of the illuminated castle in which Dante introduces a kind of elysium, where he beholds Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and all the great sages and spirits of antiquity.

Hitherto, the souls of the dead do not experience any other suffering but the privation of the presence of God. The real hell commences with the second circle, to which the two poets now descend. This second circle, although less in size, contains greater griefs, and resounds with more bitter moans. Its entrance is guarded by a hideous, ghastly monster — a mixture of brutality and pride, as horrible as crime itself— as fearfully chiding as remorse itself; he tries the culprits with the rapidity of thought. This infernal inquisitor bears the name and aspect of Minos, whose justice and integrity during his magistracy on earth has remained a respected tradition, and thus the infernal Minos is a parody of the infallability and deceitful pretensions of human justice. Crowds ever stand before the grinning judge, doomed to woe; he rapidly considers the trangressions of each, and considering

what place in hell suits their sins, he encircles himself with his tail as many times as the numbers of infernal degrees within which the souls are to be plunged. The monstrous judge beholding the poet, warns him not to venture farther, but Virgil repeats the sacramental words, and they proceed within the circle, where the spirits of carnal sinners are driven with restless fury by the stormy blast of hell, their shrieks, lamentations, and moaning being incessant and clamorous. They meet with Semiramis, Dido, Helen, Paris, and Francesca of Rimini, who, at Dante's request, relates her misfortune. Every laudatory formula has been justly bestowed on this episode, the suavity of which is untranslatable; the exquisite harmony of this picture, and of its colouring—in the very midst of the most terrible scenes—has been for ages a favourite subject of love and admiration. Ginguené, for instance, states having read it a thousand times at least, and ever receiving from it the same impression; but the episode is short—not comprising more than eighteen or twenty lives—and it seems strange that the French critic had not committed it to memory, after the few first hundred times of perusal. It is wondrous, above all, that so much tenderness, such a world of emotions, could flow from the poet's pen within so short a space. Dante is heart-struck in listening to the sad fate of Francesca; once more he falls to the ground, senseless, overwhelmed by a deep feeling of compassion, as he had before been by terror.

Among the myriads of expressions of admiration for the story of Francesca, those of Ugo Foscolo are especially graceful and original. "He

compares the love of the lady of Rimini to that of the Shakspere's Juliet; and, in truth, they both are the expression of woman's love and woman's heart, but it cannot be denied, with a slight shade of Italian passion, which Shakspere had drawn from the story of Luigi da Porta. There is, in our opinion, more delicacy and chastity in the love of Francesca; she attributes the passion of her lover to his own nobleness of soul, and to her own beauty, over which she dwells ingenuously. She confesses that she loved because she was loved; it is her dearest remembrance, which does not abandon her even in hell. Her tenderness, unalloyed by the least shadow of impiety—survives the punishment inflicted on her by the great judge; he is inflexible, but does not forbid the regret and reminiscence of former tenderness. And a singular contrast between Francesca and the English Juliet is, the muteness of the former's lover; he does not utter a word; still the reader beholds him in his own imagination, by her side, bathed with tears, and, although silent, listening with intense anguish. Beatrice and Francesca are the two forms of woman's love; but let us not commit an act of profanation; the poet's love must not be assimilated to any thing earthly; it was as extraordinary and supernatural as the nature of his soul.

When Dante recovers his senses, he finds himself in the third circle, where the gluttonous are punished: they are lying on a putrid ground from whence arises a filthy stench, terrific hail and snow, sleety flaw streaming down upon them. A voracious, cruel demon, Cerberus, a fierce and cruel monster, with glaring eyes—a black

and greasy beard, large belly and savage claws, tears and flays the howling spirits, disparting their limbs piecemeal. When he perceives the two poets, he threateningly opens his jaws, and shows his fangs. Virgil does not deign to address him; he casts a handful of earth in the beast's maw; the monster drops powerless, whilst the pilgrims proceed over the infectious mixture of shadows, slime, and mud. Among the gluttonous, Dante meets Ciacco, who foretells the future change of parties in Florence, and the divisions with which the city is about to be distracted. The entrance of the fourth circle is guarded by the *great enemy* of humanity, the demon of riches—Plutus. In this circle, which may therefore be called the circle of Plutus, the prodigal and the avaricious roll up great weights by the main force of their breasts, then, smote together with mutual upbraidings, and they roll back, turning again. On this occasion is introduced an admirable definition of fortune, that can only be compared to the celebrated ode of Horace. In this digression on fortune, the Italian poet has skilfully revived one of the ideas of ancient philosophy adopted by Christianity, namely, the idea of a secondary intelligence destined to preside over each of the celestial spheres, by entrusting to one of these intelligences the direction of the sphere of all earthly goods. The question about fortune being resolved, the poets go down into the fifth circle, where they find the wrathful, all naked, sunk into an inky, murky marsh, where, with looks of rage, they cut each other piecemeal with their fangs, in the Stygian lake. The slothful and

lazy are immersed in mire and slime (*requievit in fecibus suis.* Jerem.); and having made a compass round great part of this lake, the poets come to the foot of a lofty tower, where the demon Phlegyas, ferryman of the lake, on a signal from the tower, speedily crosses it, and conveys them to the other side, where many who had deemed themselves great kings, are now here like swine that wallow in a sty. They arrive at the city of Dis, but myriads of rebellious angels border the walls of the city with a circle of fire; three hellish furies, with feminine form, symbol of the seduction which they exercise over men, appear before Dante. The hydra, symbol of rebellion, is twisted round them, vipers encircle their temples; they clamorously call for the Gorgon, the pale, terrifying head of Medusa, which, if viewed, renders the return upwards for ever impossible. Dante is breathless; he clings to the bard; even Virgil hesitates, and covers him with his own hands. The formula with which he has conjured the spirits, in virtue of his divine mission, is now powerless. His voice sufficed to vanquish and dispel the passions, but now incredulity opposes obstacles of iron and adamant. Oh frail, miserable Humanity, close your eyes before the terrible mystery of your destiny! Blessed those who humble themselves! happy those who live in faith! God will not abandon them at the moment of the struggle. The poet closes his eyes; he hopes; he awaits his destiny with tranquillity. A terrible loud crashing is heard; a furious whirlwind rages, and sweeps away with destruction, and a messenger from heaven, the first, the only one who traverses

these accursed regions, appears, calm and proud, in the midst of the tempest which he had raised, and touching the gate with his wand—phantoms, monsters, obstacles, all vanish. This scene is one of the most profound, simple, and true, in the *Inferno*. Several modern commentators have seen nothing more in it than a political allegory, alluding to the arrival of the Emperor Henry VII. under the walls of Florence; if so, this magnificent religious episode would fall within the domain of petty personal allusions, and sublimity be transformed into triviality.

Within the fortress, or city, the two poets behold at the entrance of it, the sixth circle, where the arch-heretics, fixed in their graves, burn intensely in the flames scattered around them, moaning most lamentably. Now Dante obtains permission from his guide to converse with Farinata degli Uberti, celebrated chief of the Ghibellins, placed here because he believed that the soul perished with the body, and also with Cavalcante Cavalcanti. Farinata had twice expelled the Guelfs from Florence, and had been defeated by them at Monte-Aperti, near the Arbia; his inflexible pride, his aristocratic hauteur, his political passions, and indomitable hatred, are depicted with a few masterly strokes. His pride is a greater torture to him than the burning tomb in which he dwells; but the fierceness of the political partisan, his pride and asperity of temper, are all somewhat tempered by the sacred, soft love of the fatherland. This great Tuscan Ghibellin appears to us to have been a type, a primordial model, from which have been derived many imitations, with secondary modi-

fications and shades. Byron's Giaour was no doubt inspired by the character of Farinata. The tender, timid figure of Cavalcanti forms an affecting contrast with that of the Ghibellin chief; he is the father of that Guido, the intimate, inseparable friend of Dante on earth; recognizing the voice of the latter, and interrupting his conversation, he slowly raises himself, and asks, with *naïveté*, "Where is my son, why is he not with you?" An exquisite scene of deep sensibility, admirably contrasting, as observed, with that of Farinata. The latter predicts the poet's exile from Florence, and shows him that the condemned have knowledge of future things; but are ignorant of what is at present passing, unless it be revealed by some new comer from earth. Dante is sadly impressed by the ominous prediction, but Virgil leads him away, telling him that, when he shall stand before *her* gracious beam, whose bright eye surveys all, she will unfold to him the whole future events of his life.

The poets now arrive at the verge of a rocky precipice, which encloses the seventh circle. This circle is divided into three compartments, in the first of which the souls of tyrants who were given to blood and rapine are immersed, as high as their brow, in a flood of blood; in the second compartment, those who have done violence to their own persons are changed into rough and knotted trees, whereon the harpies build their nests; and those who have been guilty of cupidity, or have violently consumed their goods, are chased and torn by black female mastiffs, which stick their fangs, rend piecemeal, and bear

away the tortured limbs; the third compartment is a plain of dry, hot sand, where those who have committed three kinds of violence—against God, nature, and art—are tormented by burning sands, and, by flakes of fire eternally showering down upon them. All the mythological, monstrous combinations of man with beast, cover with their obscene mark the demons doomed to dwell eternally in this seventh circle; it is guarded by the minotaur—half king half bull; then come the centaurs, half horses and half men; and subsequently, the brute harpies, with feet armed with talons, half women, half vultures (*Homo absque gratia est ut arbor silvestris ferens fructum, quibus poni infernales et harpyiæ pascuntur;* St. Bernard). Dante gives an ample field to the spirit of evil, who is thus exhibited exulting proudly in all those allegorical clothings of ancient fable. The two poets, continuing their journey, meet with no passage after the third compartment; they hear the stream falling into the eighth circle, and reach the place where the water descends, dark and roaring: it is a craggy precipice, bottomless, steep, and fearful, offering no possible means to penetrate into it. Virgil takes the cord that girdled Dante's waist, and casts it down into the deep abyss: (*Erit justitia cingulum lumborum ejus, et fides cinctorium renum ejus.* Isa. xi. 5). Then comes up through the murky air, swimming up slowly, the demon of fraud (*Bestia quæ ascendit de abysso.* Apoca.) This vile image of fraud, under the form of Geryon, is a strange and formidable monster, with a face gracious, benevolent, and cheerful, the rest being all serpent,

with variegated colours, mysterious nodes and orbits, and a deadly sting. The monster hypocritically obeys Virgil, approaches timidly in all appearance, but intent on stinging with his forked tail the imprudent men who prepare to sit on his broad shoulders. The august guide, however, who anticipates all dangers with a maternal solicitude, embraces Dante in his arms, places himself between him and the murderous tail of the demon, forcing the latter to lay them down unmolested at the base of the deep-furrowed rock, within the depths of hell, called Maleboge—the depths of the eighth circle.

The eighth circle is divided into ten gulfs, which contain as many different descriptions of fraudulent sinners. In the first gulf, the seducers are incessantly and unmercifully scourged by demons: (*Fœtor intolerabilis, flagella cædentium, horrida visio dæmonum.* St. Greg.) In the second gulf, the flatterers are condemned to remain immersed in fetid filth: (*Qusia stercus in via conculcabitur.* Eccl. ix., x.) In the third gulf, those who had been guilty of simony, and have prostituted the church—chaste spouse of the lord—are fixed with their heads downwards, their legs only appearing without, and the soles of their feet lighted like a burning torch. In the fourth gulf, the sorcerers and all who predicted future events, have their faces reversed and set the contrary way of their limbs, they cannot see before them, they walk backwards and drag along with frightful contortions and sufferings their dislocated bodies. (*Quis miserebitur incautatori a serpente percusso?* Eccl. xii.) The fifth gulf is a lake of boiling pitch, guarded by demons, in

which are plunged the barterers and peculators. In the sixth gulf, are the hypocrites under the pressure of caps and hoods that are gilt outside and gleaming bright, but leaden within; so as to make their heads crack beneath them. The two poets meet with difficulties to make their way out of the sixth gulf; they have to bend their way from crag to crag, over deep abysses, up rugged rocks, Dante ever escorted and tenderly aided by his faithful paternal guide; they attain the seventh gulf, where they behold crowds of hideous pestilent serpents pursuing and tormenting the naked spirits of robbers. The episodes of serpents in this seventh gulf are peculiarly striking by their horror and originality: the wretched victims have their hands bound behind them with serpents which, twisted round them, have their heads and tails fixed through their reins; one of them, Vanni Fucci, had robbed the sacred vases and ornaments of the church of St. Jacopo at Pistoïa, a serpent darts up to his neck and transpierces him; he then kindles, burns, and is changed into ashes, which roll, instantly recollect and reform themselves, and the body resumes its self-same form. This Fucci, however, vents his fury in awful blasphemies; he is seized by serpents, which roll themselves round his neck, his arms and his body; he flies, and is pursued by Cacus in the form of a Centaur full of fury, on whose haunch swarm a whole tribe of serpents and a dragon with open wings seated on his shoulders, breathing fire on all he meets. The Centaur speeds away, and the pilgrims meet three spirits of Florentines, two of whom undergo a marvellous transformation; as Dante looked

towards them, a serpent with six feet springs forth on one of them, fastens full upon him, grasping his belly with his middle fangs, seizing each arm with his fore feet, he clutches deep in the flesh of both cheeks; then, he spreads his hinder feet on his thighs, and stings his sides with his tail, which curls and penetrates upon the reins behind; thus intertwined, they melt into one another, mingling their hues as if they both had been of burning wax. The two figures appeared blended in one form; all trace of former shape had vanished; of the four legs, two arms were made; the belly, chest, thighs and legs became such as never human eye had seen, and this shapeless miscreated monstrosity passed on slowly. Then, as the lizard shifts from bush to bush, like a flash of lightning, under the fierce burning of the dog-star—an adder all on fire, livid and swart—approaches the entrails of the other two spirits, and stings one of them in that part whence our life receives its first nourishment, and falls stretched before him. The wounded spirit speaks not, gazes on the serpent,—stands motionless, yawning as if overpowered by fever or sleep; the spirit and the serpent reciprocally continue to gaze on each other, the wound of the one and the mouth of the other exhaling a thick smoke, which having amalgamated, joined the columns of air.

After this description, Dante, inspired by a legitimate and admirable monument of poetical pride, challenges Lucan and Ovid to record such scenes. Now, instead of placing himself the last in the group of poets, when he was introduced to them, he tells them to be mute, and to listen

to him. He then continues his picture—the man and the serpent meet in exact accordance,—the latter cleaving his tail to a fork, the former, setting his feet together, while his legs and thighs so closely clung, that soon combined, they left no trace of junction. The serpent's tail assumed the shape of the feet lost by the others; his skin became soft, while that of the man hardened; in short, the fusion and transformation of their beings is minutely and marvellously related, until the soul completely transformed into a brute, hastens away along the vale, hissing; and the other, upright, spits after contemptuously as he flies, and then, scornfully turns on him his new body, exclaiming with his foaming mouth: "Let now Buoso crawl in the abyss as long as I have done." This last episode is perhaps one of the most extraordinary specimens of the descriptive powers of Dante. It is an unparalleled instance of literary art. Besides the novelty, inspiration and vivacity of this metamorphosis, the poetical talent evinced in the descriptive details, cannot be too much admired. It is a surpassing effort of genius, thus to represent and depict with a combination of words, the most outlandish, fantastical objects, facts and beings so thoroughly unnatural, and with such truthful natural power, that in reading these pictures, we imagine them to be under our own eyes; we almost believe in their reality, and that once earnestly contemplated, they can never be effaced from our memory. The Laocoon of Virgil, in a comparative impression, no longer inspires the same feelings of terror and compassion; his sufferings and serpents seem comparatively, appertaining to the usual

order of things. Here, Dante is superior to his master; he proves himself the Michael Angelo of poetry as much as the latter was the Dante of sculpture.

Now Dante and Virgil remount, the rough steps carved in the rock through which they had descended to the seventh gulf, and proceed to the arch that stretches over the eighth gulf. From thence they behold numberless flames wherein are punished the evil counsellors, each spirit being enveloped in a scorching garb that racks them incessantly. They meet with Diomed, Ulysses, Guido di Montefeltro, and arrive at the ninth gulf, where the sowers of scandal, schismatics, and heretics are seen with their limbs miserably mangled by demons, inflicting upon them constant fresh wounds as they pass along, and as soon as the gashes close and heal, they are cleft again. Here they find Mahomet, Curio, Mosca, Bertrand de Born. They proceed then to the bridge that crosses the tenth and last gulf of the eighth circle; they hear the lamentations of the alchemists and forgers; rank fumes come up to them from the foul wounds and festering sores below; a murky darkness prevents them from discerning anything; they descend the long cliff and rocks that bound this last gulf, and can survey the dismal abyss. Here the liars, calumniators, impostors, suffer various diseases; some are covered with leprous blotches, tearing their sores with their nails, others lay recumbent, crawling along, others swollen by dropsy have their features hideously enlarged, others are racked and burnt by fever, others wallow in

stench and filth. (*Putredo in ossibus ejus quæ confusione res dignas gerit.* Prov. xii.)

They finally approach the ninth and last circle, or frozen circle, which is also divided into four rounds, one enclosed within the other, and containing as many sorts of traitors. Dante fancies he sees it surrounded by lofty towers, but Virgil undeceives him, and informs him that they are giants, one of whom, Antœus, takes both the poets in his arms, and places them at the bottom of the circle. In the first round, called Caïna, Dante, trembling in the eternal chill, hears an account of the sinners who are here punished, and in the next, named Aritenora, Bocca degli Abbati, whose treachery led to the terrible defeat of the Guelfs at Monte Aperti, tells him also who his fellow-sufferers are. In a lake of ice formed by the stagnant waters of Cocytus, are fixed thousands of sinners with their faces blue with cold; they are the traitors to their kindred and to their country. Dante observes two spirits frozen in one hole, the one gnawing the other's skull. He asks the motives of such fierce revolting enmity, and Count Ugolino, pausing in his ferocious occupation, uplifts his jaw, wipes it with the mangled scalp of his foe, and relates the far-famed episode of his sufferings and death. This tragedy of Ugolino, which a German poet, Gerstenberg, has extended over a dramatic space of five acts, —five long acts of agony,—is as much indebted to the horror of its details as to their artistical perfection, for its boundless celebrity. This episode, in which, it has been seen, fiction is admirably superposed over history, has been a

favourite theme of eulogiums and disquisitions in every language. The originality of its horror has made it a favourite subject of soul-stirring quotation, and not unfrequently when the poem has not even been read. The two well-known verses of the story of Ugolino,

> E due di li chiamai, poiche fu morti:
> Poscia più che 'l dolor potè 'l digiuno,

have been fondly interpreted by many, as referring to the abominable supposition that Ugolino fed on the flesh of his own children. Formerly, a Florentine, Mr. Passigli headed the party that maintained that the interpretation the most worthy of Dante was actually that Ugolino devoured the children; the celebrated Monti ably repelled the anthropophagy, believing the poet's intention to be, that the wretched father having survived three days to his children, after having called them in vain during these long hours of anguish, rolling himself in the dark over their corpses, hunger at last became more potent than the most acute grief. Thus, the sorrow of the father is invested with a certain degree of grandeur, because we may, and perhaps ought, naturally to infer that such were his anguish and despair, that during three days they had the prodigious power of annulling the fearful effects of hunger. In our own time again, two distinguished men of Pisa—Messrs. Rosini and Carmignani—have been engaged in a special polemic on the anthropophagy of Ugolino. On both sides very ingenious arguments have been accumulated with great vivacity, but without

either party being able to convince the other, as usual. Mr. Carmignani maintained that Ugolino's meaning must be that the wretched father actually ate the putrid flesh of his sons; and he reckons among his numerous partisans and followers all those who have a decided aversion to renouncing a monstrous horror, to which they have been accustomed, and which has thus, as it were, implanted itself into their feelings. However it may be, there certainly appears to be a greater bitterness in the reflection on the misery of our nature, by accepting the meaning that, "Grief and sorrow had not killed me, but hunger did so." It is well known that this story of Ugolino has inspired the greatest artists of all ages since the days of Dante; and above all, Michael Angelo, whose basso-relievo, at the palace Gheradesca, at Florence, may be called an admirable translation of this terrible episode.

The poets, leaving Ugolino returning to the mangled scull, which he tears again with his teeth, pass onwards, where others stretched upon the back, are bound by rugged folds of ice. They are not even suffered to weep in their grief, the tears rolling inward, and causing intense pain; the first tears being frozen, and clustering round the socket. In this third round, called Ptolomea, are punished those who have betrayed others under the semblance of kindness. Here is plunged in the chill crust, Friar Alberigo, who had several of his brotherhood murdered at a banquet of reconciliation to which he had invited them, and who mentions the case of Branca Doria, whose body, although alive on earth, was without its soul, which was already plunged

into the Cocytus, a demon being left in its stead. Now, in the fourth and last round of the ninth circle are those who have betrayed their benefactors; they are wholly covered with ice; Lucifer or Dis, surrounded with ice, stands in the very centre of the earth, or lowest depth of hell; and passing the centre, the poets ascend, till by a secret path they reach the surface of the other hemisphere of the earth. Dante's Satan, or Dis, Beelzebub, Lucifer—whatever be the name given him—stands with his bust above the frozen mass in which are fixed the greatest criminals, who appear transparently like a fœtus in glass; he has three faces on his head, the three colours of which correspond to the three parts of the world then known, and form a sinister contrast with the three circles of light through which the divine trinity will appear, later in resplendent rays to the spirit of the poet. After having exhibited Satan under all the aspects borrowed of mythology, it became almost a necessity to restore to the arch-fiend, the grotesque and terrible physiognomy attributed to it by all the mediæval legends. In this respect we behold a type of ugliness in all its grandeur. Dante's demons are all, as Mr. Rosenkranz would say, esthetically hideous; they are described with a truth that makes your flesh creep on your bones, and your blood curdle and freeze; we see them with their horns, claws, whips, hooks; they are all black, scorched, burned, sharp, angulous, making hideous grimaces—blending malice, cruelty, impudence, with lying and baseness; they torture the miserable beings plunged into their realm with a surpassing delight. "There is a peculiar

grandeur," says Mr. Ruskin, in his Stones of Venice, "in the ungovernable fury of Dante's fiends. . . . . the deaf, blind, unspeakable rage, fierce as the lightning, but erring from its mark or turning senselessly against itself, and still further debased by foulness of form and action. . . . ." And in truth, all that is most base, ignoble, repulsive and obscene, having been exhausted in the picture of the demons, the poet draws with a few bold, masterly strokes, the image of Satan.

Several English critics have disparagingly compared Dante with Milton by their descriptions of the arch-fiend, and they have done so, we believe, in consequence of their not having penetrated enough into the spirit of the Italian poet and of his time. Milton's demons are only fallen angels, since his drama commences before the fall of man. They are of an equivocal nature, without any well-determined forms, not representing much more than abstract vices, with the exception of the spiritual vice of pride, of which Satan is the supreme type. This conception is somewhat meagre in its details, monotonous in its form, and does not bear the slightest relation with that of Dante. Human genius has never produced anything greater, it is true, than the English Satan, rising on the lake of fire to brave Him who plunged him into it; nothing can be more sublime than his lofty indomitable pride, his haughty challenge to the Almighty, and his sinister delight in the eternal revolt, although writhing in eternal sufferings. But, as observed by Mr. Ruskin, Milton makes his fiends too noble, and misses the foulness,

inconstancy, and fury of wickedness. His Satan possesses some virtues, not the less virtuous for being applied to wicked purposes; he becomes in reality an object of interest and admiration instead of inspiring feelings of repulsiveness and horror. Now Dante, besides the well-known fact that he represents his time, during which horror and beauty were in constant opposition, Dante was strictly logical in exhibiting the deep degradation of his wicked demoniacal spirits; all the features of extreme wickedness cannot and ought not to be written upon noble forms, and above all, the Catholic religion stigmatizes as a sin the feelings of compassion to which may give rise those whom God in His justice has chastised. Dante, faithful to his rigid orthodoxy, has been careful in not investing the grand monstrous figure of his Satan, with any trait that might inspire the least sentiment of admiration, or culpable sympathy. The spirit of evil has but too much power already over the human heart, and requires to be laid bare with all its fatal blandisments, instead of being adorned with the seductive beauties of poetry. The Italian picture of Dis bears no resemblance to the melancholy grandeur of the fallen angel, nor does it conduce to the dangerous conclusion, that the rebel who has been vanquished by God, may in some degree be proud of his defeat. Dante's Satan has fallen lower than the brute; his ugliness is equal to his former beauty; his six wings of cherubim, which formerly held him darting in the ethereal space, have been changed into monstrous, heavy, flabby sails—something in colour and form like

the wings of a gigantic bat—which, by their incessant play, produce the winds that freeze Cocytus in its lowest depth; his six eyes weep, tears and bloody foam fast pouring over his triple chin, his teeth tearing a sinner at every mouth. King of wretchedness and shame, instead of exercising a supreme ascendency over the universe—as his pride had led him to hope—he is nailed down on his throne of ice, at the bottom of the abyss, overwhelmed with remorse and sorrow, crushed down by the whole weight of the earth (*neque absorbeat me profundum: neque urgeat super me putens os suum.* Ps.)

Our brief analysis of the *Inferno* merely mentions some of the principal pictures, the subjects of which, have been selected by the poet in all the phases of the history of humanity, irrespective of time and periods. However perfectly distinct and isolated these pictures may appear, they nevertheless exhibit the profound, energetic, religious, poetical sentiment of the poet, thus representing faithfully a grave, austere and essentially Christian epoch. Dante was well versed in the mythology of classical paganism, and unacquainted as well as his cotemporaries, with the study of the mythologies of the various nations of the world. The reminiscences of the former, therefore, frequently appear in the *Inferno*, and constitute one of its poetical elements. In an abstract literary point of view, the combination of pagan reminiscences with Christian doctrines might be condemned with a certain degree of justice, so far as affecting the unity of the poem, according to the absolute laws of taste and æsthetics. But the poem claims to be con-

templated in its true signification, namely, in an historical point of view, in which case, its meaning becomes invested with a special and deeper interest than any that could arise from the purely literary question. Dante—as we will endeavour to testify in a subsequent chapter—Dante was a true, earnest, orthodox Christian. His express intention was, to display in his poem all his theological learning. His genius was naïf, poetical. His own rich soul was the sole source of his inspirations, and being endowed with an extreme painful sensibility, it was constantly assailed by harrowing emotions, deep impressions, for the expansion of which he experienced an imperative yearning, whilst he had the loftiest faculties for doing so. Those pagan reminiscences bear no trace of a trite necessity on the part of the poet, to have recourse to the remains of the dead poetry of paganism, and, it is evident that in accepting them, such as they were in his time, the Christian genius of Dante has modified them in such a manner as to make them harmonise with his own feelings and object. The Roman traditions formed unavoidably part of his theories; they exercised a certain influence over his ideas and imagination. He was an enthusiastic admirer of the Latin poetry especially, and he transferred himself, as it were, by the power of his imagination, into the very centre of the age and world into which it had grown and flourished. It was natural, therefore, that Dante, creating a Hell of his own, should adopt some of those pagan materials, so gracefully and effectively employed in that very classical poetry, which to him and to his age was the type of every poetry. At the

same time, there appear in the poem, evident symptoms of the struggle that must have existed in the imagination of the poet, between the power and temptation of the Roman traditions, and his Christian, theological sentiments; thus, the pagan figures, images and pictures, are generally modified or disguised—or tinged with Christian colours, as if, in the impossibility of eradicating them from his mind, or conceiving the necessity of introducing them, he strained to assimilate them to his own ideas and to those of his age.

Among the great apparent similarities between the Greek mythology and the fictions of Dante, we find, for instance, at the commencement of the *Inferno*, the Acheron and the ferryman Charon. The Acheron, in the pagan fiction, is a real river, having its source and partially flowing on earth; whilst, in the Italian poem, it is a mysterious, imaginary stream, issuing from the unknown cavities of Mount Ida, flowing from the colossal, streaked head of an old man, symbol of the various ages of the world, and bearing no resemblance to the ancient fiction. Nor is Dante's Charon a copy of the Latin Charon. Mr. Cayley, in his notes on the Divine Comedy, and other translators of the poem, have noted his resembling Virgil's Charon in hoariness—fiery eyes—driving the spirits with his oar. But, the Latin ferryman was a real god—although belonging to an inferior order—and is more or less invested with the general attributes of the Pagan divinities; whilst the Italian Charon is a real devil, one of the spirits fallen from heaven with Lucifer, and become one of the instruments of Divine

justice in the infernal regions; and this is the Charon most faithfully, accurately imitated by Michael Angelo in his Last Judgment. Again, how different the spirits of the Latin and Italin poets, when, for instance, they describe the souls wandering on the bank of Acheron and hurrying to enter the bark of the ferryman. With Virgil, their anxiety to cross arises merely from their idea and hope of a better state in their hell than to be wandering and crowding incessantly along the livid river. With Dante, the souls doomed to eternal sufferings have no reason to be so anxious to reach the other bank, where unspeakable woes await them; but, by a mystical, awful trait of his genius, they are supposed to be so instigated by Divine justice, that their terror is transformed into a yearning, and they rush with the same frenzy to cross the fatal stream. Again, no student of the ancient poetry would recognize the Cerberus of Virgil in the one described by Dante; the latter is a huge dragon—a great worm, *(granverme)*—an apocalyptic monster: the same may be said of the demon Plutus, whom Dante calls a cursed wolf, a ferocious beast; and describing his voice and language, destined to terrify those who hear them, with an horrible originality. On the whole, the Pagan figures are not much more so than by their names, for, they are transformed into demons and devils with horns, tails, hideous contortions, deformities, such as the mediæval imagination represented them: thus, the supreme judge Minos, is no longer the old man of Crete: with Dante, he is a demon also—grinding eternally his teeth—of a formidable

aspect, and armed with an extraordinary long tail, as we have seen.

The mythological elements of antiquity introduced by Dante in his *Inferno* are those which were floating in the popular imaginations during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; their state and influence are precisely similar. They did not check the uniform progress of Christian civilization, being subjected to its irresistible movement, nor do they affect or impair the admirable unity of the poem, which had its source in the religious convictions of the poet. Dante, moreover, must have been as familiar as possible with the Virgilian hell, and most probably it entered into his views to transfer into his own Christian hell all those mythological figures and accessories, transformed as it has been seen. The Italian poet, Christian and orthodox, believing in one sole religion and one God, anxious to create and visit the Christian hell, appears in contradiction with himself by taking fondly for his guide and patron a pagan poet, who had described a pagan hell.

He escapes the anomaly and difficulty, however, by a bold and original hypothesis. He totally ignores the pagan hell described by Virgil, and does not admit that the Latin hell was any other than the Christian hell, the only one of every true believer, created by God before the creation of man. No explanations, no formal reasons are given respecting this original hypothesis; it arose from personal motives, and the fact is so blended with the very essence of the poem as a mysterious precedent, that it has often been passed unperceived by the

students of the *Inferno*. Dante appears to ignore the nature of his guide's creation in the whole course of his own poem with a singular *naïveté*. When following his master, being on the point of penetrating into the infernal regions, doubt and terror assailing him, he pauses in order to deliberate, and remembers at this critical moment that this very same pilgrimage has been undertaken twice before him by two simple mortals, Æneas and St. Paul, and whenever Virgil speaks of hell in the Italian poem, he appears to know nothing of, also, or have completely forgotten, his own magnificent hell; his spirit, moreover, did not descend at his death to his own pagan Elysean fields, but to the limbo, where are received the souls of all just and good men, dead before Christianity. It is there that Beatrice came from heaven to beg him to succour Dante. During the pilgrimage of the two poets, Virgil proves himself acquainted with every detail, every circle, rock, or abyss of the Italian-Christian hell. He had visited it before the advent of Jesus Christ. He had encountered the same struggles with the very same demons who oppose menacingly the further progress of Dante; in short, the Virgil of the *Inferno* is no longer the poet of the Æneid; his ideas, his words, his knowledge, and observations all characterize, not a Roman of the court of Augustus, but a complete mediæval Italian. The pagan and Roman elements, therefore, instead of being incongruously blended with, or impairing the great Italian epic, are, on the contrary, skilfully introduced, revived and Christianized, as it were, by the genius of the poet.

Dante, in the Inferno, endeavours occasionally to appear the disciple of the ancients; thus the sages as well as the ideas of antiquity are either revived or transformed by his genius, or they occupy but a secondary position. He reveres his beloved master, Virgil, but he invests him with his own theological learning, his own sentiments, his own ideas. Finally, in every portion of the poem the poet ever proves himself the man of his age—he is ever faithful to his principles and to his tenets.

CHAPTER IX.

Belief of the ancients in a transitory state of expiation.—Form of Dante's Purgatory.—Description of it.—Dante and Virgil emerge from the *Inferno* and enter *Purgatorio*.—The four Stars.—The approach to the Purgatory.—Cato.—The poets cross over to the Island.—Casella.—Manfred.—Crowd of indolent spirits who have delayed their repentance.—Buonconte di Montefeltro.—Sordello.—Adventures of Sordello.—Object of Dante in his character of Sordello.—Dante and Virgil enter Purgatory.—Its commencement compared to that of the *Inferno*.—First cornice of the Purgatory, where the sin of Pride is punished.—The second cornice, where the sin of Envy is expiated.—Punishment of the sin of Anger in the third cornice.—Lukewarmness in the fourth cornice.—Vision of Dante.—The sin of Avarice in the fifth cornice.—Hugh Capet.—His imprecation.—Appearance of Statius.—The sin of Gluttony in the sixth cornice.—Digression of Statius.—The seventh and last cornice, in which the sin of Incontinence is punished.—Passage of the poets through the flames.—Dream of Dante.—Disappearance of Virgil.—Dante proceeds alone.—He beholds a triumphal car, with its resplendent train.—Beatrice descends from Heaven.—She upbraids the poet.—His confusion and repentance.—He is taken to the Tree of Knowledge, is purified and regenerated.—Characteristics of the Purgatory.

THE belief in the eternity of the human soul, and in her future state, according to the nature of her activity and development during her transient terrestrial existence, is a universal creed inherent in our nature. The general, ancient belief, that man after death is subject to three different states, namely, one of eternal beatitude for the just, one of eternal punishment for the sinner rooted in evil, and a third one, of temporary purification for the sinners susceptible of recovering a healthy, pure state of their soul,

is a doctrine which was partially shared by the most pre-eminent among the sages of antiquity. It is more especially to be found developed with great precision and nobleness of language in Plato. According to Pythagoras, the souls of those who have been slaves of their senses, or violated the divine and human laws, are rolled round the earth, and only return to heaven after having been thus carried off round the globe during many centuries. Virgil describes the sufferings inflicted on the deceased souls until they are purified from the earthly infections.

Dante, in his Purgatory, describes also the state of those who, anxious to enjoy the light of true religion, are subjected to its expiating discipline. His imagination bodies forth the prevailing idea of purgatory, as a lofty mountain at the antipodes of Jerusalem, considered as the centre of the inhabited earth (*Ista est Jerusalem, in medio gentium. . . et in circuisse ejus terras.* Ezek. v.) The expiatory mountain is situated in a deserted island, and lost in the midst of the ocean ; it is divided into nine zones, in the ascent of which the souls are purified from sin, and it is crowned by the terrestrial paradise. Thus, Eden and Sion—the cradle of Adam and the tomb of Christ—are the two poles of the Christian world. If, however, we deduct from what we call the nine zones—the terrestrial paradise occupying the summit, and the lower step, where all those who delayed their conversion to the last moment, are waiting their being permitted to enter the real purgatory—there remains seven compartments, or cornices, each being consecrated to the expiation of one of the seven mortal sins. Thus,

the symmetry and disposition of the mountain is similar to that of the *Inferno*, but in an inverted sense, the summit of the former corresponding to the state of man fully regenerated, and the summit of the latter, inverted, to the state of man descended to the lowest degree of evil.

The *Purgatorio* contrasts exquisitely with the deep gloom of the preceding *cantica;* it has something of the soft melancholy of twilight, as well as of the aerial vagueness of a pleasurable dream, arising from the presentiment of a future blessedness on the part of the souls submitted to the expiatory ordeals of the various zones. The material sufferings, although similar to those of hell, give rise to very different impressions; they engender feelings of a calm and tranquil pity, instead of harrowing emotions, for the penitent souls are conscious of the justice of their sufferings; they accept them, they long for them, because they feel that by them, they will be purified, regenerated, and merit the ineffable and serene felicities of heaven. The two poets, in order to arrive at the island of the purgatory, have only to cling on the thick and shaggy fleece of Lucifer, and make their way between the frozen crusts. Lucifer, the huge reptile, traverses the globe like an axis, his feet turned towards heaven, his head being thrust in the abyss, which he dug in his fall. (*Infernus subter conturbatus est in occursum adventus tui. Quomodo cecidisti de cœlo, Lucifer?* Isa.) Dante and Virgil having thus traversed the centre of the earth, take a long, subterraneous, secret pathway to reach again the world of light; the feet of Lucifer, which they had before seen

hanging down, are now erect; they are at the antipodes of the nine circles of hell, in another hemisphere. Two days and two nights have elapsed since the mysterious meeting of the two poets.

On emerging from the infernal regions, Dante, with his face still sullied by the dark, mephitic vapours, beholds light again; he enters the confines of Purgatory before day-break, when the aspect of the serene pure air was varied by the soft tints of the rising sun; they rejoice his weary eyes. The four brilliant stars of the southern cross shed a soft light on the shore. Here the poet alludes to the four stars which guided those who sailed from Europe to the South, not yet disovered in his age, but which it is supposed he knew, either from long tradition, or from the relation of voyagers. It seems also, that a globe made in Egypt by some Arabs, in 1225, and on which the cross is indicated, may have been seen by Dante towards 1310 or 1314. Baron Alexander von Humboldt corroborates in his *Géographiedu Nouveau Continent,* the confirmatory observations of other men of science, as to the reality of Dante's allusion to the stars, and refutes Mr. Streckfuss—one of the German translators of the Divine Comedy, —who also conceived that the stars were purely symbolical, and representing, "probably, the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance; as it has been supposed by many commentators. The venerable, cosmopolite savant observes also, that the philosophical and religious mysticism which penetrates and vivifies the immense composition of Dante, assigns to every

object an ideal existence by the side of the real or material existence; and he concludes by demonstrating that the Italian poet was perfectly consistent and positive in his description of the four stars. The delight of the poet at issuing into the pure air, after his terrific pilgrimage, inspires his muse; his style, as observed by Ginguené, assumes immediately a splendour and a serenity adapted to his subject. His metaphors are all taken from smiling objects. The majestic and affecting commencement of the third book of Paradise Lost was also inspired by the same subject. Dante, however, seems more faithful to nature, such as he depicts it; his imagery is more brilliant and varied, all his pictures of nature being characterized by a fascinating vividness and freshness of colouring. The deserted beach of the mountain of Purgatory bears a remarkable similarity of position and contrast of style with the plain where we beheld the poet at the commencement of the *Inferno*. In both cases, we see the same thoughtfulness, the same uncertainty; in both cases we behold the same sudden, unexpected apparition of the shade of a celebrated Roman. In the latter, it was Virgil, or pure natural reason deprived of the knowledge of the true God; now, in the Purgatory, it is Cato—stoical virtue ending by suicide: both pure and noble intelligences, sublime representatives of the genius and wisdom of paganism, as great as it was possible, being thus abandoned to themselves, without the true spiritual light from above, in the absence of which, the poet failed in attaining his object, and the stoic, from an excess of ardour, went far beyond it.

The most illustrious cotemporaries of Cato—and the poets especially, the more loved and admired by Dante, all unite in considering the great stoic as the most just of men, as the very type of virtue. Lucan says that his unswerving rule was to live for the fatherland—not to consider himself born for self, but for the whole world. Horace says that the whole world was subdued, excepting the indomitable soul of Cato, and Virgil also states that pious souls received their rule from Cato. Dante saw in the heroic Roman a martyr of liberty. His partiality and respect are easily conceived. He does not place him in the limbo, but invests him in some degree with the guardianship of the access to the Purgatory, where, at the intimation of Virgil, he bends his knees, with eyes submissive, and pays due reverence to him, whilst his guide begs the austere old Roman to be favourable to him whom a lady from heaven has placed under his charge during his journey through the realm of the dead; adding that Dante is journeying in search of liberty, which is so dear to men and the value of which may well be known to him who refused life for her sake: "Thou knowest, death in Utica was not bitter to thee, where thou didst leave thy spoil which will shine so bright on the great day of judgment." Noble and simple words, harmonising faithfully with the soul and life of the poet! They reveal the whole of humanity—the incessant struggles of men and nations in asserting their right to intellectual, moral and political liberty, by dispelling ignorance, subduing the passions and delivering societies from execrable despotism. Dante's Cato warns him and Virgil

what is needful to be done before they proceed on their way through the purgatory, and disappears. The two poets go towards the shore, where the master cleanses kindly with dew, Dante's face, suffused with tears, and restores to it the hue which the shades of Hell had covered, and girds him with a reed, as commanded by Cato.

Now, the poets require again to cross the water, in order to reach the island; this time instead of the hoary, infernal demon, striking and pushing the wretched shades, they behold at the horizon a beautiful creature with a snowy robe—long golden locks, and expanded swan-like wings. It is one of God's angels, a celestial steersman coming over the sea, with spirits to purgatory, on a light skiff, gliding on the waves with no other sails than his wings, wafted by the breeze. Among these spirits Dante meets with Casella, a celebrated Florentine musician, in whose company, it seems, the poet often relieved his mind from severer studies. Casella entertains them by singing one of Dante's sonnets; and the pilgrims, thus loitering, are rebuked by old Cato, who urges them to hasten forward. The pilgrims, after beholding all the souls dispersing over the plain, arrive at the foot of a mountain, and finding it too steep to climb, they inquire the way from a troop of spirits coming towards them; one of them—Manfred, King of Naples—makes himself known to Dante, and relates the particulars of his death.

They afterwards ascend the mountain by a steep and narrow path, pent in on each side

by rock, till they reach a part of it that opens into a cornice. They find indolent spirits under the shade, doomed to linger on account of their having delayed their repentance. It must be observed that the number of these idle, indolent, repenting souls is very great. The space in which they sojourn, before being admitted in the abode of their purification, is very extensive; but a profound thought, a profound truth, are the origin of this fiction. Our world, our societies, ever boasting of their civilization and industry, nevertheless consist chiefly of such a crowd, heedless, futile, indifferent, void of any intense active love of good and truth, although not especially wedded to evil. Does not our world teem with such human beings, living in that state of moral indolence, so often engendering the bodily inactivity and idleness? Dante here depicts with his truthful picturesqueness and vividness, the mass of creatures, so great in his day—and which probably he would not find much diminished in our time—which, thoughtless on the future, wholly absorbed by the present and by self, pass along on this earth, perfectly happy, till the chill of death comes over them, and then their conscience often leaves them in desolation and solitude; they take a tardy refuge in their God. Those indolent souls are to whirl and wander without the boundaries of purgatory during thirty years for each year that they have continued to persist in their blindness, unless the prayers from a heart living in the grace of God, may come to abridge this period, according to the consoling doctrine of solidarity, although limited to good works in the church, and solemnly

proclaimed at this period, at the opening of the great jubilee. And proceeding, the poets meet with others who had deferred their repentance till they were overthrown by a violent death, when sufficient space being allowed them, they were then graciously allowed to make their peace with their God; amongst these the poets meet with Buonconte di Montefeltro, who fell at the battle of Campaldino, in which, it may be remembered, Dante took a distinguished part; the narrative of the warrior's shade is a beautiful episode. Other souls, similarly situated, beseech the poet to obtain for them the prayers of their friend, when he shall be returned to this world; but he doubts whether the dead can be benefited by the prayers of the living: he turns to his guide, who —let it be earnestly noted, for the solution of this doubt—refers him to Beatrice. Immediately after, the poets meet Sordello, the Mantuan, who sits aloof, alone, proud and disdainful; but who, on finding that Virgil is his countryman, bursts in testimonies of affection; upon which, Dante breaks forth into an invective against the unnatural divisions which distract Italy, and especially Florence. This is one of the most beautiful and celebrated scenes in this *cantica*, breathing the loftiest poetical inspiration, blended with the most intense political feelings. It has often appeared singular that such a scene should arise from the meeting with this Sordello. Who was Sordello?

Sordello was a Troubadour, very celebrated for his adventures and his provençal ditties, at the period that immediately preceded the birth of Dante. His fame had been completely disfigured

by the popular traditions, but, the researches of Tiraboschi as well as the more recent investigations of Fauriel, have partially restored the original figure of Sordello to its real character, and, although this troubadour was not the grave, austere, important personage such as he appears in the *Purgatorio*, popular opinion had invested him with a certain degree of grandeur which justifies the poet for having assigned to him such a conspicuous part in the celebrated scene. Sordello was born in the neighbourhood of Mantua, and, from his earliest youth, devoted himself exclusively to poetry. He was a poet in three languages, Italian, Provençal, and French (the langue d'oïl.) His Italian poems have been lost, but Dante in his *Vulgari Eloquio* expresses his admiration of them, as well as of the superior eloquence of Sordello; his compositions in French were, it seems, very numerous, and remarkable. The French language was then studied in the whole of Italy, and more especially spoken in the north of the Peninsula; it was considered the most flexible and agreeable, for which reason, Brunetto Latini adopted it for the composition of his *Tresor*. The Provençal idiom, however, was still the most popular in Italy, although the decline of its pre-eminence commenced immediately after this period; Sordello was especially distinguished for his poetical compositions in Provençal, and his literary fame rests entirely upon them. He adopted the romantic, adventurous life of the troubadours of those days. His person was handsome, he sang admirably, and his existence of intinerant poet, so replete with adventures, was eminently successful; there

was not a castle where his apparition was not considered as a most delightful event. After long eventful wanderings in Italy; after many adventures at the court of its greatest princes, especially that of the formidable Ezzelino da Romano, Sordello—in consequence of some act of gallantry somewhat rash and equivocal—was obliged to fly. He crossed the Alps and came to Provence, where Charles d'Anjou received him with the greatest distinction at his court, then one of the most elegant in Europe.

The fame of Sordello must evidently have been very great, or, he could not have met with a brilliant reception from a prince like Charles d'Anjou—an austere personage, who never smiled, and, always brooding over some ambitious political conception. Authentic documents testify the visit of the popular troubadour to the courts of the kings of Castille and Arragon, and his return to Charles d'Anjou whom he accompanied in his expedition against Manfred of Naples. But sickness obliged him to remain at Novarra, where completely forgotten by his patron, he lingered for a length of time, languishing and suffering, in want of the common necessaries of life, bereft of the energy and hopes of youth to sustain him in his sad position. In a letter of Pope Clement IV., which has been preserved, and addressed to Charles d'Anjou, upbraiding him for his ingratitude and harshness of conduct, Sordello is mentioned as one whose great services and worth were entitled to a munificent recognition, instead of being ungratefully abandoned at Novarra. And this pontiff was a man of a high character, very accomplished and

experienced, who entertained, it is evident, a great regard for the merit and reputation of Sordello. After this, every trace of the Mantuan troubadour is lost. No document mentions what became of him, nor the place of his death. But, as Dante places his soul in the part of the Purgatory assigned by him to those who died of a violent and unforeseen death, before they have time to repent of their faults, and as it could not be so without intention and fortuitously, it is generally supposed that he died assassinated or of some other violent death. Sordello, was therefore, a very important personage; at the court of Provence he was invested with all the honours of knighthood, and his functions of troubadour were as ennobled as they could be; he received also the gift of a fief, and his position was long that of a nobleman who cultivated poetry as it was then the custom among the most distinguished gentlemen of the court of Provence. Such was the life and fame of Sordello. The object of Dante could not be to induce a reminiscence of the simple and material facts of such an existence; his poetical conception does not bear much relation to the details of the history of the troubadour; but, in consequence, probably, of some Italian composition of Sordello, or some circumstances in his life evincing a profound love for his country, he has selected the celebrated troubadour, and transformed him into a pure type,—into a lofty ideal of a patriot, perhaps, especially of the Italian patriot. The apostrophe against Florence is very powerful; it pours forth irony and bitterness; but his invectives are not confined to Florence; he appears to have care-

fully noted the blemishes or weak points of every city; and vented upon them his withering wrath. Dante is thus severe for Florence, the Guelfic city, and he is no less so for Sienna, the Ghibellin city; he upbraids sternly the Siennese for their vanity, which, he says, in his *Inferno*, is still far beyond the French vanity. The accusation of great vanity, so generally lavished on the French, is evidently by no means very modern. Lucca, also, where in 1314, he had experienced a tender sentiment for Gentucca—where he had been so long with his friend Uguccione, Lucca is lashed by the poet with the most insulting sarcasms; he says that every one in that city is a rogue excepting Bontaro, and this man was notorious as the most consummate scoundrel.

To return to the pilgrimage of Dante and Virgil in the Purgatory. After the joyful greetings between the two Mantuan poets, as the night hinders the pilgrims from further ascent, Sordello leads them apart to an eminence from whence they behold a beautiful valley scooped out of the mountains, where are many illustrious spirits of kings and emperors who have delayed repentance to a late period. One of them sings a hymn, and two angels with flaming swords, broken at the points, descend from heaven as guardians of the valley, into which Virgil and Dante enter by desire of Sordello. Dante meets the judge Gallura, who had been well known to him, and soon after Conrad Malespina, who predicts to him his future banishment. In the meantime, three exceedingly bright stars appear near the pole; a serpent creeps subtly into the valley, but flees at hearing the approach of the angelic guards. Now

Dante, overcome by sleep, sinks down upon the grass; he sees a vision; in the meantime he is carried up the mountain by Lucia, and on awakening, finds himself, two hours after sunrise, with Virgil near the gate of purgatory: it is kept by God's angel, who sits on the threshold, which appeared a rock of diamond. He falls thrice prostrate on his bosom, with humble heart before the celestial guardian deputed by Saint Peter. The angel, with his blunted sword, traces seven Ps, denoting the seven sins *(Peccata)*, and commands him to have them all washed away when entered; he is then admitted, together with Virgil, through the gate of purgatory.

In the first compartment of the *Purgatorio*, as well as in the first circle of the *Inferno*, the destiny of the souls is equally in suspense. In the latter, the great personages of paganism have their dwelling in a brilliant castle; in the former, the glorious spirits whom faith has enlightened on the vanity of human glory, are humbly seated in a peaceful and flowery valley. In the ninth canto of the first *Cantica*, temptation is admirably represented under the form of the furies; whilst in the second, it is the serpent of Genesis creeping under the grass and flowers at the gate of Eden. Thus, the spirit of evil is exhibited in its utmost efforts to shake the best and most pious resolutions. In the *Inferno*, the angel of wrath crushes with his rod the pride of the demons. In the *Purgatorio*, two angels—angels of hope—holding in their hands swords blunted by expiation, put to flight, by the mere rustling of their wings, the accursed who dares again to approach the terrestrial paradise: (*super muros*

tuos Jerusalem, constitui custodes. Isa.) Before descending into the second circle of hell, Dante fell prostrate, overpowered by a deep slumber; now, before ascending the second step of purgatory, he falls into a gentle sleep. We have seen the infernal, symbolic Minos, pronouncing inexorable decrees, expressed by his hideous tail: at the entrance of the purgatory, we behold the angel of penitence, seated placidly, hailing with kindness the sinners who have obtained their pardon from God. Dante accomplishes the sacrament of the confession, in all its pious details, with every pious formality, at the feet of the angel invested with the sacerdotal ministry, and is then admitted to commence the expiation of his sins. (*Introite portasejus in confessione, atria ejus in hymnis.* Ps.) Again, at the commencement of the *Divina Commedia*, we saw how the queen of angels—whom Virgil does not dare to name, out of respect—had warned Beatrice, through the medium of Lucia, that her faithful friend was in danger—that it was high time to save him. Beatrice did not hesitate to descend into hell in order to succour the poor lost poet. Now, it is the turn of Lucia, the saint martyr—emblem of celestial light *(Lux)*—who takes the slumbering poet into her arms and brings him at the feet of the angel to whom has been entrusted the keys of the expiatory city: but Dante learns this circumstance and apparition through Virgil only. The time has not yet come when the two blessed creatures will appear in all the splendour of their imperishable beauty. In the *Purgatorio*, as well as in the *Inferno*, the poet accumulates a mass of material facts and details, as if he were

bent on persuading the reader of the reality of his pilgrimage. He minutely relates his fatigues, his adventures, his ascending and descending steep rocks, rugged paths, his falling asleep at the close of the day, broken with fatigue, on a step of granite—his progress being impeded by darkness—his dreams, his visions. He seems to have ransacked his genius, in order to give every appearance of probability to the extraordinary prodigies he relates. His object is to be believed. He admits that he has had dreams and visions during his voyage; but the whole poem is an energetic, formal assertion of his having accomplished, as well as Saint Paul, a mysterious voyage; and of his intense anxiety to be believed on every thing he relates about his visit to hell, to purgatory, and to paradise.

The poets being admitted at the gate of purgatory, ascend a winding path up the rock till they reach an open and level space that extends each way round the mountain. They discover that one side of the bank is of white marble, admirably wrought, on which are seen skilfully engraven many stories of humility. They read on the chiselled marble an anecdote exalting the virtue of the Emperor Trajan, and worded with the usual perfection of the poet, presenting, in the space of twenty lines, treasures of sensibility, with instances of a profound insight into the human heart. Whilst contemplating those memorials of meek humbleness and of human virtue, a multitude of souls advance towards them who are bent down beneath the weight of heavy stones expiating the sin of pride. (*Conquassabit capita in terra multorum.*

Ps.) In presence of such a spectacle the poet asks of himself with amazement:—what can be the folly and blindness of man in forgetting his real condition, and puff himself up in self-admiration without a thought of the day when he is to appear in presence of Divine justice? Oh, how much we are nothing! exclaimed Bossuet; and, it is this nothingness contrasted with human pride which is thus expressed by the poet: "Oh proud, haughty Christians, miserable, wretched beings, who seeing feebly with the mental eye, rely upon your backward steps."—"Do you not perceive that we are worms born to become the angelic butterfly, which must, unimpeded, repair to justice?"—"Wherefore does your soul puffed up aspire so loftily? What are ye but embryos of insects, like the worm, abortive in its transformation?" After a paraphrase of the Lord's prayer, supposed to be sung by the spirits, Virgil inquires the way, and is answered by Omberto, who relates his sin and sufferings, his arrogance on earth, having provoked his countrymen to such a pitch of fury that he was murdered by them. Dante is then recognized by Oderisi, and exclaims, "O art thou not Oderisi, the glory of Agobbio, and of that art which first in Paris was named illumination?" Upon which the illuminator, or miniature painter, who had been a friend of Giotto and Dante, discourses on the vanity of human glory, on the frailty of earthly fame, and closes his narrative by, "Your fame is like the grass whose hue doth come and go, and scorched by that same sun from whose warmth it first grew fresh from the earth." It must be remarked that

Oderisi, with one word only, marks the separation between the modes of life so intimately connected, although so dissimilar; he does not say *our* but *your* fame, because the terrestrial world, with its evanescent, vain glories, is dead for him, being in the realm where he purifies himself before appearing before God; he is calm, although suffering, because he is undergoing the necessary ordeal to attain the infinite beatitude that will follow; he beholds and judges our world with a placid pity, without a shadow of passion, and without any illusion.

Dante, with an overburdened soul, journeys on. His master desires him to look down on the ground which they are treading, and he observes that various instances of pride recorded in history and fable, are engraven on the rocky pavement: Lucifer, Saul, Rehoboam, Alcmœon, Sennacherib, Holophernes, Ilion. They leave the first cornice, and are conducted by an angel to the stairs which lead up to the second, where the sin of envy is purged. Proceeding to the right they hear voices uttered by invisible spirits recounting famous examples of charity; then the souls of the envious appear; they are clad in sackcloth, having their eyes sewed up with an iron thread. (*Mens invida eum de alieno bono affligitur, de medio lucis obscuratur.* St. Greg.) In this second cornice appear the souls of Guido del Duca of Brettinoro and of Rinieri dal Calboli of Romagna, who speak to each other; the latter, hearing that Dante comes from the banks of the Arno, inveighs against the degeneracy of all those who dwell in the cities visited by that stream; and the

former, in like manner, against the inhabitants of Romagna. Nearly the whole of this canto (the fourteenth) is historical and political, and is one of the many instances of the care with which the poet interweaves the two subjects of his poem. The shade, after having depicted and stigmatized the many vices of the inhabitants of the Val d'Arno, alludes, in a mysterious, vague, language to future disasters, and contrasts the purity of ancient manners to the corruption and baseness of their degenerated time: grief prevents him from continuing; and he only adds, "O, Tuscan, leave me; for I find greater delight in weeping than in speech, so much pity has wrung my heart." The poets proceed; they advance onward in stillness, when a voice, cleaving the air like lightning, met them, shouting the words of Cain, "Whosoever finds me will slay me." It then fled away like the thunder that suddenly breaks away the cloud—a terrific, mysterious scene, evoking sinister images of crime and murder!

A radiant angel now invites the poets to ascend the next steep. On their way, Dante suggests certain doubts which are resolved by Virgil; the latter explains the difference between earthly and heavenly good; the former admitting not participation, the latter increasing by it—the highest good reflecting itself into love, which spreads and extends in charity, and referring him again to Beatrice, if he requires further answer to allay his thirstings. They reach the third cornice, where the sin of anger is punished. Dante, in a kind of waking dream, beholds remarkable instances of patience, when, by slow degrees, a dense fog, dark as night, gathers round

them, and deprives them both of sight and pure air. As they proceed through the dark smoke in which are wrapt the penitent souls that have yielded to the sin of anger,—(*Caligavit ab indignatione oculus meus.* Job, xvii.) they hear the voices of spirits praying to the Lamb for mercy; one of these, argues with Dante on the error of such as impute our actions to necessity, and lays down the principles of the doctrine of free-will, and attributes the great misfortunes of the world to the undue mixture of temporal and spiritual authority in the person of the Pope. The poets afterwards emerge from this thick vapour; and soon after, Dante's fancy represents to him in lively portraiture some noted examples of anger. This imaginative state being dissipated by the appearance of an angel, they are invited by the celestial envoy to continue upwards to the fourth cornice, where lukewarmness in love towards God, or indifference, is punished. Virgil here explains that the vice of indifference proceeds from a defect of love, and that all love can only be of two sorts, either natural, or of the soul; of which sort the former is always right, but the latter may err either in respect of object or of degree; Dante, thirsting for further explanations on the nature of love, urges his master to unfold other mysteries on the subject, to which the latter complies, concluding that he can show what reason discovers, but that which lies beyond appertains to the domain of faith, not of reason, and that it will be explained by, Beatrice. After this psychological dialogue between the two poets, a multitude of spirits rush by, in great eagerness to ascend, and as they pass they record instances

of zeal and fervent affection. Others follow; their punishment is to obey the resistless will, and rush and speed incessantly round the mountain, and passing along, they shout forth memorable examples of the sin for which they suffer. Such a spectacle plunges Dante into deep thoughts, and his meditation changing to a dream, he falls into a profound slumber.

Dante now relates his dream or vision; it takes place previous to entering the three higher cornices that still remain to be visited, namely, those on which are punished the sins of avarice, gluttony, and incontinence, and this vision of the poet consisting of the appearance of a fantastical being, would appear to be the emblem of these three vices: it is the form of a woman, stammering, with distorted hands and feet—eyes squinting, and deadly white; he gazes on her, in consequence of which, she recovers her speech; her face becomes endued with a rosy hue; she sings to him in the sweetest strains, that she is a syren; then another form of holy appearance rises, to shame her—appeals to Virgil and seizing the other, the syren, she tears her robe in front, opens her and shows her belly, whence the loathsome smell coming from it, awakes Dante. Such is the vision, generally interpreted as the symbol of falsehood and truth. After it, the poets, summoned by an angel, ascend to the fifth cornice, where the sin of avarice is punished—the souls being all lying downward—cleaved to the ground—bewailing in loud lamentations: they meet among them Pope Adrian the fifth, and afterwards Hugh Capet, who records illustrious examples of voluntary poverty and of bounty; he

then tells who he himself is, and speaks of his descendants on the French throne, adding some noted instance of avarice. Here political passion inflames again the poet, although he finds himself in those calm regions so far removed from every worldly clamour. He puts in the mouth of Hugh Capet a bitter satire of his posterity, of that evil plant, he says, of which he was the root, and which has so overshadowed all the Christian lands that rarely a wholesome fruit can be gathered upon them. Hugh Capet expresses in burning words his execration for his race, the horror and disgust they inspire him with; his imprecations break forth with fury, till overpowered, breathless, animated, as it were, by a hallowed hatred,—that hatred, the root of which lays deep in a boundless love for what is just and good; he exclaims, "O Lord, when shall I joyfully behold the vengeance profoundly hidden in which thy wrath secretly delights."

When Dante and his guide are on the point of leaving the circle where avarice is punished, the mountain shakes fearfully, as if it were falling; and on all sides a vehement shout arises, uttering the song, *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* They both behold the spirit of Statius who has undergone his time of punishment, and is on his way to Paradise. He explains that the shaking of the mountain and the singing of the hymn, take place whenever any one prepares to quit purgatory to take his flight to Paradise, and expresses joy at beholding Virgil. Thus is Statius, the author of the Thebaid, introduced; for it is the intention of Dante that Virgil should disappear and not continue to guide him, whilst Statius is

to remain with him till the very end of the journey through purgatory. Virgil, Statius, and Dante ascend up to the sixth cornice, where the sin of gluttony is punished, the two Latin poets discoursing by the way. Statius attributes his conversion to Christianity as well as his taste for poetry, to Virgil. They come near a tree—the tree of knowledge—hung with fragrant fruits, and watered by a stream that falls around from a rock, and voices are heard to proceed from among the leaves, recording examples of temperance. Emaciated spirits, doing penance for gluttony, make their appearance; they are hollow-eyed, ghastly, and withered; they turn perpetually in their circle, passing and repassing before the fruits of the tree and the limpid stream round it, their thirsting and desire ever excited and keener, but never satisfied. (*Demigrata est super carbones facies eorum, et non sunt cogniti, adhæsit cutis eorum ossibus; aruit, et facta est quasi lignum.* Jerem. Thr. iv.) Among these Dante has recognized Forese, who had been his friend on earth; they hold a long conversation; the two friends dwell on the sad destiny of their country, and Forese, attributing all its misfortunes to Corso Donati, he predicts the violent death of this formidable chief of the Blacks. Then the three poets arrive at another tree, from whence again issue voices that record ancient examples of gluttony, and, proceeding forwards, they are directed by an angel which way to ascend to the next cornice of the mountain.

Whilst the poets are mounting singly, owing to the narrowness of the path, Dante, uncertain, and desirous of knowledge, begs to be informed

how the shades, which require no food, can become emaciated. Statius, on the invitation of Virgil, undertakes to explain this, and enters into a history of the formation of the soul; he shows how, after it leaves the body, it is impressed by the same passions which influenced it when in the body. This passage, of more than sixty lines, giving a theory on the functions of the blood, on the formation of the vegetative soul as well as of the sensitive soul—on their development, and the subsequent preservation of the image of the body which the soul animated on earth, or, the aerial vesture of the soul—undoubtedly offers little interest, consisting of details of an obsolete as well as erroneous physical philosophy; but it will remain, as well as many passages of Lucretius, as a marvellous monument of poetical art; for, it is impossible to embody a more intricate subject in a clearer and more beautiful poetry. After this digression, the three poets arrive on the seventh and last cornice, where the sin of incontinence is punished, the sinners walking through flames: (*Probasti cor meum, et visitasti nocte: igne me examinasti.* Ps. *Ambulate in lumine ignis vestri, et in flammis quas succendistis.* Is. l.) —The spirits of those suffering in the fire, are heard recording illustrious instances of chastity. Other spirits wonder at seeing the shadow cast by the body of Dante; on his informing them that he is really alive, one of them addresses him and points out to him the spirits of other shades, with whom he converses. Now the poets cannot proceed further without passing also through the fire; an angel urges them on; but Dante hesitates; he pictures to him-

self the human forms in the glowing flames which he beheld; he remains fixed and stubborn, when his master somewhat incensed, cries "My son, between Beatrice and thee standeth this wall," he then follows him in the flame, his gracious guide discoursing of Beatrice, to encourage him, as they proceed, and finds that he has passed through unhurt. Guided by a voice that sang: "Come ye, O blessed of my father," the poets, proceed upwards, but hindered by the fall of night from going further, they lay down to repose during the night on the steps of a lofty stair. Dante slumbers, and in a dream he beholds a young, beautiful lady, gathering flowers in a meadow to make a garland. She mentions her own name in sweet and graceful strains; it is Leah, the symbol of action, or active life, with her sister Rachel, figuring the contemplative life. With the return of the morning, the poets reach the height, and here Virgil gives Dante full liberty to use his own pleasure and judgment in the choice of his way, till he shall meet with Beatrice.

The mission of Virgil being terminated, Dante is now on the threshold of the primitive dwelling of man, from which an irrevocable decree excludes the Latin poet. The angels having effaced from his forehead the seven Ps that had been traced upon it, he can now proceed alone, without fear of going astray. Dante is now eager to visit the forest of the terrestrial Paradise; he pursues leisurely his way, breathing delicious odours and the softest breeze, till he is stopped by a stream, on the other side of which he beholds a fair lady, all alone, singing and culling flowers. He ad-

dresses her, beseeching her to approach, that he may see her and listen to her song. The graceful and lovely figure, exquisitely described by the poet, comes within three paces of him, leaving only the streamlet between them. She tells him that the water which flows between them, is here called Lethe, and in another place has the name of Eunoe. This fair lady, called Matilda, resumes her singing as though inspired by love; she moves on the verdant bank, when turning, she exclaims: "Brother, look and hear." Suddenly, a surpassing brilliancy bursts through the whole forest; a delicious melody is heard; a marvellous sight is offered to the eyes of the poet in the description of which his inspiration seems kindled anew. Seven golden tapers, twenty-five elder men crowned, and a crowd clad in white, precede a car triumphal and blazing, drawn by a Gryphon whose wings rise out of sight, with three nymphs circling in smooth dance on the right wheel, and four on the left. This car with the whole of its staff, are evidently described according to Ezekiel and the Apocalypse, being a symbol of the church, in the descriptions of which the poet has lavished all the treasures of his style and imagination. When the car is opposite, near Dante, a peal of thunder is heard; the multitude around turns with respect towards it; voices and strains of angels are heard; angelic hands shower clouds of flowers on the car; a maid appears in a white veil, wreathed with olive, robed in hue of living flame. It is Beatrice, descending from heaven. The poet is struck down by the heavenly influence, which even in childhood, he says, thrilled him; deeply moved and terrified, he

turns to Virgil for a refuge, but he had vanished, and Beatrice tells him not to weep, that other causes shall soon cause his tears to flow. She chides him for having forgotten her and her virtuous inspirations. Her severe reproofs strike the poet with shame and repentance; he falls prostrate on the ground; when he raises himself from that state of humility and confusion, he is drawn by Matilda through the waters of Lethe, then presented first to the four virgins,—figures of the cardinal virtues—who lead him to the symbolic figure of the Gryphon; and the other three virgins, or evangelical virtues—intercede for him to Beatrice, that she should display to him her second beauty. Despite the severity of her reprimands, Beatrice by her beauty revives in the poet's heart, all the soft and tender impressions of former years. She now appears to him as superior to what she was formerly, as she was superior to other women in her brief sojourn on earth. Afterwards, Dante, in company with Matilda and Statius, follows the procession of the blest to the tree of knowledge. After a hymn, Dante falls asleep and is awakened by a flash of splendour; on awakening, he exclaims, "Where is Beatrice?" She replies to him herself, and tells him to observe the car, and on his return to earth to record all he sees. She reveals the future destiny of the church and darkly predicts some future events. The poet is then conducted to the fountain—from whence the two streams, Lethe and Eunoe, separating, flow different ways—and having tasted its waters, at the desire of Beatrice, transmitted by Matilda, he returns pure and regenerated, like plants that are renewed with fresh foliage, thus prepared and worthy of mounting to the stars.

Such is our meagre analysis of the Purgatory. The latter part especially of this *cantica* is dazzling and bewildering by its gorgeous, resplendent scenes. We could not do more than mention them. The poetical world does not possess any thing more beautiful and affecting than the meeting of Dante and Beatrice in a world of truth, innocence and love. The thrillings and anguish of the poet, who after ten years of tears and sorrow, beholds again his lady-love on a throne of celestial glory; the passionate love and respect with which he inhales her atmosphere, her smile and her reproofs, at the same time sweet and severe; his shame, sobs and the subdued bursts of his soul—in fine, all the details of that scene form a most dramatic and harrowing picture. The intervention of God's angels, who, silently gliding in the ethereal realm, with hands joined, tearful eyes, pray the radiant maid to be merciful towards her prostrate repentant lover, add to the hallowed beauty of the scene, the whole of which merges into an apocalyptic vision of unparalleled grandeur. The poet, embraces in one glance, the whole destiny of humanity, past, present and future; he takes man at the moment of his fall, restores him through expiation to the times announced by the prophets, when, after the fulfilment of his destinies on earth, he will return purified and regenerated, to the realm of God and of eternal happiness. The subject of this part of the poem being expiation, every part of it converts to this general idea; thus, we behold the pagan expiation in the suicide of Cato, afterwards the Christian expiation through penitence, and finally, the divine expiation, with-

out which it was impossible for man to efface the original sin. After the absolution of the mortal sins, there still remained the primitive blot, the redeeming of which, is only granted by God, through the blood of His Son, in the sacrament of baptism. Thus, the political and moral sense of the poem does not admit of any doubt or obscurity, and the whole vision is methodically unfolded in its chronological order. The Purgatory does not seem to be much read out of Italy, and from Count Balbo's statement, it does not appear to be much more so in the land speaking the language of Dante, and "Yet," he observes, "the Purgatory is perhaps the most beautiful invention in the Divine Comedy, or the one, at least, in which is seen the noblest portion of the heart of Dante,—love." The passages in which appear the reminiscence of Beatrice are numerous. His muse soars highest—in strains of still greater suavity, when it alludes to *her*, whom he beholds again after ten years in the poem, but after twenty-four years in reality. The latter part is more especially a love-poem, in which Beatrice and the angels are the principal characters. The vast number and the marvellous variety of the angels have been a subject of the admiration of Ginguené and still more of Count Balbo. The latter enumerates all those who appear in the Purgatory, and he does not perhaps confine himself sufficiently to the consideration of them, in a merely poetical point of view. We have seen that the souls are conducted by an angel; that there is one at each cornice of the mountain; that the virtues round the car are also angels; that a group of angels intercede for the poet. And, they

all speak and are clothed in a different way; they form a progressive world of love and celestial figures, concentrating round the pre-eminent figure, Beatrice. Any minute characteristic becomes relatively insignificant in presence of this all-absorbing idea—of this heart-rooted object of the poet. Dante, therefore, had not made a rash and vain promise, when he wrote in the *Vita nuova*, that if God permitted it, he would say of *her*, that which has never been said of any other person, begging the Master of the Masters to admit him, to behold the glory of the celestial woman in the contemplation of *Him* who is blessed in all ages.

CHAPTER X.

Analysis of the *Paradiso*.—Form of the paradise.—Dant is wrapt into heaven, guided by Beatrice.—They enter the first planet, the Moon—Explanations given by Beatrice.—The second planet, Mercury. —The Emperor Justinian.—Romeo.—The third planet, Venus.—Charles Martel.—Cunizza.—Folco.—The Sun, or fourth heaven.—Thomas Aquinas.—Buonaventura.—Their discourses.—The fifth heaven, Mars.—Cacciaguida.—His narrative.—The sixth heaven, or planet of Jupiter.—Appearance of the souls.—They assume the form of an eagle—Discourses of the eagle.—The planet of Saturn, or seventh heaven.—Jacob's ladder.—Piero Damiano.—St. Benedict.—The eighth heaven, or the fixed stars.—Dante beholds the light divine, the Sun, dwelling of Christ.—Triumph of the Virgin Mary.—St. Peter questions Dante on faith, St. James on hope, and St. John on charity.—Adam. —The Empyrean.—St. Bernard and the Virgin Mary.—Dante is permitted to behold our Saviour.—The Divine Trinity.—Conclusion of the Divine Comedy.—Characteristics of the *Paradiso*.

In the third part of the *Divina Commedia* Dante takes his reader to the realm of eternal felicities. After so many vicissitudes, he has finally attained the mansions of heaven, the *Paradiso*. He commences by clearly stating that having been in heaven, and witnessed things which no one who comes from thence could relate, he will now sing all he beheld in the sacred realm. Dante, although in paradise, still remains a man; and again in this *cantica* appear many reminiscences of his earthly feelings and adventures, but they do not impair its continuous elevation; nor do the metaphysical dissertatious introduced in it, and often considered as superfluous, affect the divine splendour,

the sweet melody—the harmony and charm of the *ensemble.* The poet, in his ideal of heaven, has followed the Ptolemaic system, somewhat amended by St. Thomas. His paradise is divided into nine spheres, or nine heavens (besides the empyrean), wheeling round our earth in circles that increase in size and rapidity of motion, according to their distance from the centre, which is in accordance with the expression of the psalm, that the heavens relate the glory of the Lord. Dante is wafted away by a mysterious power beyond the limits assigned to human nature. He is gradually elevated to the contemplation of the Supreme Being. His movements become instantaneous, for, according to the opinion of St. Augustine and of other fathers, the movements of the blessed beings, will surpass thought itself in rapidity. The poet is only made aware of his passage from one planet to another by a sweeter smile and a brighter glance from Beatrice. Lamentations and blasphemies were heard on entering the circles of the infernal abyss; shades, more especially, met the pilgrims. On approaching the expiatory mountain, they beheld the souls of mortals, and were hailed with strains of love and glory; but now the poet attains the celestial regions in the midst of songs of love and glory, and beholds in the paradise, splendours, spirits, divine substances.

Dante, commencing his pilgrimage, is rapt to the highest heaven. He sees Beatrice gazing on the sun more steadfastly than an eagle. He fixes his own eyes upon her, and draws from her a supernatural power which enables him

to bear the intensity of divine light beyond that which is permitted to mortals, and this increases so marvellously, that day seems to him added to day, as if the Almighty had adorned the sky with another sun. He feels himself raised above human nature; nothing remains in him but what flows from divine love, the light of which wafts him to heaven; and, as he approaches the celestial spheres, he hears their immortal harmony, a portion of heaven appearing to him broader than an immense lake blazing with the sun's flame. Beatrice anticipates his enquiries, and resolves certain doubts that arise in his mind, after which the poet warns his readers not to follow him in his adventurous voyage unless they have accustomed themselves to divine contemplations. Beatrice continuing to gaze upwards, and Dante upon her, they enter the first planet, the moon. She explains to him the cause of the spots which appear on that globe according to the astronomy of the thirteenth century. Milton speaks also of the spots on the moon, and although in a manner naturally very different, —his explanation being purely physical,—he probably was induced to do so in imitation of the Florentine poet. Although the blessed, inhabiting the same paradise, boundless ocean of light and love, although they all, according to their worth, experience a complete felicity in the divine vision,—many spirits meet the poet as he advances, their object being to initiate him to the hierarchy of deservedness and of grace, as well as to habituate his mortal eyes to sustain the splendour of celestial glory. Each spirit selects the planet which is the most in accordance

with the virtue preferred by him whilst on earth (*Spiritus redeat ad Deum, qui dedit illum.* Eccl. xii.) The earthly reminiscences are thus blended with the ineffable felicities of the divine regions, and magnificent episodes are interspersed in this best and divine part of the Divine Comedy. But the introduction of such mortal things resemble the indistinct murmurs of the distant tempest; they are a mere shadow in the immense harmony of heaven, and images of an inimitable grace succeed to intricate dissertations —and terrible invectives against the abject state of Christians, to the austere exposition of the Catholic truths.

The sphere of the moon, as well as the first compartments of purgatory and of hell, is destined to the lukewarm souls that have been torn away from their duties by the violence of others. Their fault is twofold; they either have not opposed sufficient resistance to the violence offered to them, or have not returned immediately on the cessation of the persecution, to the path of duty. Those feeble, pale, uncertain, doubtful spirits dwell in the cold, deadly, white planet of Diana. Here Dante describes the shadowy forms of several nuns who have not fully adhered to their vows. He meets Piccarda, the sister of Corso Donati, violently carried off from her convent by him, and forced to return to secular life; and she points out to him the spirit of the Empress Costanza. While Dante and Beatrice continue in the moon, she removes certain doubts which he had conceived respecting the place assigned to the blessed. Beatrice explains to her lover the astronomical system which forms,

as it were, the frame of this part of the poem; and continuing, she turns away from human knowledge in order to penetrate divine science; she deducts the admirable and blessed consequences of the principle of charity, by which every soul is satisfied with its share of blessedness, without wishing for more. (*Deus charitas est, et qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo.* St. Joan.) She afterwards speaks of the perseverance indispensable for the accomplishment of holy resolutions,—dwells on the gravity of the vows, a sublime compact between man and God,—and severely blames the levity of those who engage their freedom by thoughtless and often guilty oaths, as instanced by Jephthah. She then addresses to the bad worshippers of Christ well merited upbraidings. "Christians," she says, "bring more gravity into your actions, be not like feathers, blown about by every wind, nor think that all water may efface your sins; you, have to guide you, the Old and New Testament and the pastor of the church; let them suffice for your salvation; if evil passions entice you remember, that you are men and not senseless beasts."

Now Dante ascends with Beatrice to the planet Mercury, which is the second heaven, where many spirits greet him, offering to answer anything he may wish to know from them. As they approach him, they evince their joyfulness by the increased effulgence issuing from each. This planet is peopled by the active and energetic souls who have applied their genius to the promotion of what is good and just. One of them accosting Dante, and glowing with greater

radiance, and concealing himself within the splendour of his own pure light, answers the poet. It is the Emperor Justinian, who relates his own history and the conquests of the Romans. Here the poet reveals again his own political opinions by introducing into this imperial narrative his own ideas on the divine right, of the emperors, and on the conduct and destiny of the Guelfs and Ghibellins. It is a magnificent instance of historical poetry. Then appears the spirit of Romeo, arrayed in pure and spotless light. This Romeo had been very celebrated for his skill and virtues; he became minister of Raymond Berenger, Count of Provence, and conducted so well his affairs that the four daughters of the count married four kings. The minister was rewarded with princely ingratitude, and, calumniated, poor, and old, he was reduced to wander a pilgrim and a beggar.

Justinian and the other spirits, disappear in the distance, like the swiftest sparks, but the words of the emperor having excited some doubts in Dante's mind respecting the human redemption, he remains perplexed, awed, bowed down, when Beatrice beaming upon him, with a radiant smile, and aware of his thoughts, gives him a long explanation, in which all the doubts of the poet are solved. They both afterwards ascend to the third heaven, which is the planet of Venus. In this planet dwell in their effulgence the holy souls which, from the love of the human being, have raised themselves to the love of their creator. Dante, is wafted upwards unconsciously, and only perceives it by the new loveliness that graces his lady. The souls appear as lumi-

naries, impelled in circling motion; they come towards him, advancing from the blessed round of the seraphims, and the poet meets with the spirit of Charles Martel, King of Hungary, who had been his friend on earth. Charles, shrouded in his celestial splendour, speaks of the realms to which he was heir, and alludes to the political events of Florence, when on his own death, being succeeded by his brother Robert, the Emperor Henry VII., found in him a successful foe, and he afterwards discourses on the cause why children differ in disposition from their parents, lamenting that parents do not bring up their children to those professions for which they are most suited. Having cleared the doubts of the poet and foretold the evils that his posterity were doomed to bear, Charles moves away, and is succeeded by another spirit, the spirit of Cunizza, sister of Eccelino, the tyrant of Padoua; she confesses her having been subjected to the influences of the planet which she is now inhabiting, and exults in her fate, since it is shared by Folco of Genoa, a celebrated Provençal poet, who was surnamed *di Marsiglia*, having been perhaps bishop of Marseilles. Folco converses also with Dante; he energetically reproves the Pope for his neglect of the Holy Land; he prognosticates some reverse to the pontifical power, and expresses the sorrow and indignation—so deeply felt by the exiled poet—on beholding the pontifical court continuing to remain at Avignon, thus abandoning the tomb of Saint Peter and the metropolis of the Christian world.

The next ascent carries Dante and Beatrice in the sun, or fourth heaven. They are encom-

passed with a wreath of blessed spirits, twelve in number, one of whom, Thomas Aquinas, declares the names and endowments of the rest. The angelic doctor gives a detailed account of the life and character of St. Francis, and having concluded, his blessed flame and the holy wreath are spontaneously impelled away, and encompassed by another circle, or garland, of glorified souls, one of whom, Buonaventura, nobly relates the history, and celebrates the praises of St. Dominic; he also informs Dante, who are those forming this second wreath: he concludes by courteously stating that the warm amiability and learned speech of Friar Thomas, have moved him to record the praises of such a champion. Thomas Aquinas then resumes his speech; he solves some doubts which he discerned in the mind of Dante; he warns him against assenting to any proposition without having duly examined it. Saint Thomas certainly evinces a Ghibellin tendency in this second discourse; moreover, the reciprocal warmth of both saints in exalting alternately, the founders of the two celebrated rival orders, has been considered as bearing some shadow of partiality on both sides; it is, more probably an indirect blame as well as an intended conciliation, between the Dominicans and the Franciscans, who at all times have given to Christendom the sad spectacle of their miserable jealousies and wretched quarrels. Saint Thomas afterwards conciliates an apparent contradiction of two texts of the Scriptures, in establishing a subtle distinction between the three persons endowed by God with the highest intelligence: Adam, endowed with all the perfections of which humanity is

susceptible; Jesus, the incarnate wisdom, and Solomon, the greatest king who has ever existed on earth. Such is, no doubt, the spirit and object of the long theological political scene of the great doctors, whose bright beings are dwelling in the sun under the form of beautiful garlands. (*Qui . . . . . docti fuerint, fulgebunt quasi splendor firmamenti: et qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos, quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates.* Dan. xii.)

The poet, at the evening hour of twilight, beholds through heaven a new radiance, new appearances, still more dazzling, which showed his Beatrice so fair, so passing lovely, that his words cannot express, nor his mind follow her infinite sweetness. They have been transferred to a more lofty bliss, namely, into the fifth heaven, which is that of Mars. In the red planet of Mars, Dante beholds the spirits of those who have died fighting for the true faith; they are ranged in the sign of a cross, thickly studded, and compared to the dazzling rays they shoot forth, every other light appears pale. At the same time, the poet's ears are delighted by the sweetest melody, which charms and overpowers his senses. The delightful harmony having ceased, one of the bright spirits, or gems, descending swiftly through the radiant track to the foot of the cross, addresses Dante: it is Cacciaguida, his ancestor, who died for the true faith in Palestine; he speaks to the poet a language so enthusiastic and mystical, his thoughts soar so high that they are beyond the reach of the mortal man, who can only comprehend his ancestor when the warmth of his transport is over, and when his words are brought down to the level of his mind. Dante

gazes on Beatrice, and encouraged by her smile, he prays the living *topaz* to inform him of his name. Cacciaguida now, in a long and admirable narrative, describes the pure and simple manners of the Florentines in his time; he gives a history of his own birth and of his descendants—describes the extent of Florence when he lived there—recounts the names of the chief families who then inhabited it, attributing its degeneracy and subsequent disgrace to the introduction of families from the neighbouring country and villages, and to their mixture with the primitive citizens; and finally, he predicts to Dante his banishment, as well as the calamities he is about to suffer from his ungrateful countrymen, exhorting him not to shrink from declaring the truth revealed in his vision—namely, his *Divina Commedia*—however bitter it may be.

This discourse of Cacciaguida is one of the most celebrated passages of the Divine Comedy. The description of the pure, modest life of the old Florentines, when the old city was chaste and sober, at peace with all; when the ladies had no bright jewels nor rich sandals; when no Sardanapalus had introduced unheard of luxuries; when the noblest citizens wore plain leather belts, the ladies coming forth with unpainted faces,—the whole of this description is one of the most extraordinary instances of poetical power, in a style of truth and nature: it is a creation of the greatest learning and simplicity with new modes of colouring, exquisitely pure, artistical, and vivid. The sketch of the history of Florence which follows the picture of its ancient manners, in which all the vicissitudes of the republic are

depicted, with an account of its most celebrated men and most illustrious families, must have created a powerful interest, as well as deep emotions, among the Florentines and in the whole of Tuscany. This portion of the discourse occupies a whole canto; and forms, in itself, a perfect poetical history. The latter part of it referring especially to Dante, when the poet, with a melancholy courage, is anxious to learn all that cruel fortune hath in store for him, forms an admirable complement to the historical premises that precede: it is also a perfect poetical biography. The poet, at his lady's bidding, addresses the Light of his ancestor, stating, that whilst Virgil accompanied him to the dark regions of the dead, his own destiny was shadowed out to him in words that filled his mind with doubt, and that he would fain to know all the miseries that await him, because the arrow comes gentler when foreseen. He then hears from the Light the history of his misfortunes, and of all the pangs and anguish that will follow his banishment; it bestows great eulogiums on Can Grande; it tells him the celebrated, profound words:—

> Tu proverai si come sa di Sale
> La pane altrui, é com' e' duro calle
> Lo scendere e'l Salir per l'altrui scale.

"You will experience how bitter is the bread of others, and how hard it is to ascend and descend the steps of a stranger." The poet, armed with courage, resigned, prepares to act with foresight; although, if he timidly unfolds the truth, he fears to die in the esteem of those for whom the present time will be old. Upon which, the Light

so dear to him, shines with a livelier flame, and urges him, as stated, to reveal his visions; which, although they may seem harsh at first, will prove a most wholesome food when digested; and that his revelation will be like the tempest that assails the loftiest heights, and that hence greater glory will redound upon him.

The spirit of Cacciaguida, after brooding some time in silence on his own thoughts, resumes his intercourse with the poet, and points out to him all the blessed spirits inhabiting the planet Mars, of renowned warriors and crusaders. As he names them, they display an effulgence on the branch of the luminous cross, similar to that of lightning on a cloud. Dante, observing afterwards the surpassing beauty of his lady-guide, transcending all he had seen before, perceives his own flight to the planet of Jupiter, the sixth heaven. Here the souls of those who have administered justice rightly in the world, move in a very extraordinary manner. The light of these saintly creatures, fly about, each singing in its own light, sometimes in a round, sometimes in a long array, and changing their form and figures as they fly, now forming the letter D, then I, or the letter L, and the bright lights continuing to flutter, represent the thirty-five letters of the alphabet, descending and resting, in two files, so as to trace the words, *Diligite justitiam* on the first, and the words *Qui judicatis terram* on the second; then the thousands of celestial splendours, twinkling and scattering, re-form again, and take the shape of a crowned eagle, the majestic poetical symbol of the unity of volition in the hearts of the just, and also of

Dante's political utopia developed in his work on the universal monarchy. The poet, in his effusion, addresses the star from which springs all earthly justice; he prays that the wrath of the Almighty may come down on the turpitude of simony, on the abuse made of spiritual power, who is perpetually holding back the bread from the poor which the Father of all doth not deny.

The mysterious, beauteous eagle, composed of a mutitude of glad spirits, each appearing like a little ruby, and glowing intensely, now speaks as with one voice proceeding from the multitude of spirits; he explains the cause for which it is exalted to that state of glory. He then solves a doubt which the poet had entertained respecting the possibility of salvation without belief in Christ; and clapping with his wings, soars like a falcon, chanting forth praises of divine grace. But his praises of the divine goodness partakes somewhat of a satire on all bad Christians, on all bad sovereigns who have oppressed the people. The eagle asks where would be the justice to condemn those whose lives and actions have been pure and blameless, although they have died without Christ being revealed to them either by words or writing?—who is he who could assume the place of the great Judge, and who, with such limited powers, could scan His counsels? Such a subject, he observes, would be a matter of great doubt if they were not clearly enunciated by the supreme authority of the Scriptures; the multitude invoking the name of Christ shall have far greater cause to grieve on the day of judgment than those who never

knew His name; and what will not the Persians say to your kings when they shall see open the book containing the record of their blasted fame? So says the sacred eagle; after which he launches an indelible stigma on the despicable kings who lived and disgraced the throne in the poet's time. O Christians of our age, and of every denomination, how long will you remain hardened against the true spirit of the Gospel, thus illustrated by the Florentine poet at the commencement of the fourteenth century? (*Non omnis qui dicit . . . . Domine, Domine, intrabit in regnum cœlorum: sed qui facit voluntatem Patris mei.* Matt. vii.—*Multi ab oriente . . . . venient et recumbent cum Abraham . . . . in regno cœlorum: Filii autem regni ejicientur in tenebras.* Matt. viii.)

The eagle, after his imprecation against the royal infamies of the poet's time, celebrates the praise of several good kings of former ages. These glorified spirits form the eye of the imperial bird. The poet discovers that David forms the pupil of the eagle's eye, five other sovereigns being in the circle round it. Now Dante fixes again his eyes on his loved lady; he no longer sees her accustomed, divine smile; she observes to him that since her beauty grows brighter as they rise higher in the celestial regions, his mortal vision would shrink and be dazzled if a veil were not cast before her surpassing radiance. They both are wafted into the seventh heaven, which is the planet of Saturn, wherein is placed a ladder so lofty that the top of it, is out of sight. It is Jacob's ladder, resplendent with golden colours, surrounded by

a multitude of bright stars, flying and whirling round,—souls of those who have passed their life in holy retirement and contemplation. One of these comes near them; it is the blazing spirit of Piero Damiano, who, answering the questions put to him by Dante, with the permission of Beatrice, relates his own history, not omitting that he was a Cardinal, on which occasion he declaims warmly against the luxury of modern prelates, exclaiming as he concludes, "Oh, divine patience, canst thou endure so much." The poet, sad and oppressed, turns to his dear guide, who soothes him, as a mother consoles her pale and breathless child, and draws his attention to another Light, the spirit of St. Benedict, who addresses Dante, discloses his own name as well as the names of certain of his companions in bliss, and replies to the poet's request that he might look on the form of the saint without that covering of splendour which then invested it; the founder of the Benedictins lastly inveighs against the scandalous corruption of the monks. He then draws back to his assembly of Light-Spirits, all together clustering into one, and rolling upwards like an eddying wind.

On a sign of his conductress, Dante is carried to the eighth heaven, or that of the fixed stars, which he enters at the constellation of the twins —a blessed constellation to the poet, which had shone over his birth. It was then a general popular belief, that the stars exercised a very great influence over the lives of men: (*Solem et lunam et omnia astra cœli . . . . creavit Deus . . . . in ministerium cunctis gentibus.* Deut. iv.) The poet hopes that the glorious constellation,

the light divine, to which he owes whatever genius he possesses, will strengthen him for the arduous passage upwards to which he is impelled. Beatrice tells him that, as he is now so near the abode of bliss his sight must have become acute and clear; she desires him to look down, and obeying, he smiles on beholding the mean aspect of our globe. The celestial conductress of the poet, fixing her gaze towards the centre of the heavens, the highest light is exquisitely compared to the bird resting under the foliage on the nest of her sweet family during the darkness of the night that shrouds all things, impatient to find food for her young, which renders every labour grateful, forestalling the time, and, perched on the spray, expecting the sun with an ardent longing. The heavens becoming wrapt in resplendent flames, Beatrice exclaims, "Behold the host of Christ triumphant, and the abundant store ripened by these revolving spheres." His sight cannot endure the sun he beholds—pre-eminent over a million of divine luminaries—and she tells him, that in this sun dwells our Saviour, or the wisdom and the power which re-established the communications between the earth and the heavens. Dante falls into an ecstacy of divine love, loses every sense, and cannot record what happened. His conductress bids him to open his eyes, to gaze on her, as he can now bear the brightness of her smile, having witnessed such intense splendours. He then recovers, as if from a dream, but incapable of depicting the divine smile that illuminated her holy face. She now desires him to behold the garden blooming with flowers nurtured under the effulgence of the sun,

Christ's dwelling, where is the rose in which the Word Divine made itself flesh. Dante describes with a pious and poetical enthusiasm, the triumph of the Virgin Mary—the queen of heaven—surrounded by the blessed host, singing hymns in her glory, and clothed in immense flames, raising in lofty summits, manifest their love for Mary. Thus the three celestial women have protected the poet—Beatrice, in hell; Lucia, in the purgatory; and now Mary, in the starred heaven: it is a symbol of the eternal glory of Jesus Christ, a trace of his triumph animating the three parts of the poem.

Beatrice introduces her friend to the spirits in a mystical language, when the bright crowd, moving and wheeling, darting like comets, encircle the poet and his guide. One, glowing more brilliantly than the others, is recognized as the prince of the apostles; she requests him to question Dante on the subject of faith, and here the poet, in his replies, displays his theological learning with particular partiality; he delights in a series of arguments and distinctions, very familiar to him; and they give ample satisfaction to the apostolic Light, which in his kindly feelings —casts his arms around him—blessing him, and thrice encircles him, chanting loud. Now, another light moves from the dazzling group towards the poet and Beatrice; it is Saint James, who questions Dante concerning Hope, and who also withdraws as satisfied as Saint Peter with his replies. Another effulgent light emerges, which, mingled with the others with delight, the spirit of Saint John, who perceiving that Dante looks intently on him, informs him that his earthly

body is in earth, and that Christ and the virgin alone, have ascended to heaven with their bodies. Saint John now examines Dante, concerning charity, on the love of God, and is no less satisfied than the other apostles, with the skill and learning evinced by the poet in his answers. Another spirit, also invested with the most brilliant flame, joins the apostles, whom Beatrice names to Dante, as the spirit of the first living soul—of Adam. Adam tells when he was created, and placed in the terrestrial paradise; how long he remained in that state, what was the occasion of his fall; when he was admitted into heaven; and finally enters into details, perhaps too long—on the primitive language which he spake. Afterwards, glorifying strains are heard through the whole paradise. The poet falls into a rapture of love and peace; he beholds one universal gladness and smile; when the spirit of Saint Peter waxing still brighter,—enjoining silence, rebukes severely the avarice of his successors on the apostolic See; all the heavenly host reddens, as a cloud coloured by the sun, and the apostle then pronounces with vehemence, a discourse against the corruption, the luxuries, and the abuses of the court of Rome, after which all the spirits vanish upwards.

The poet's celestial guide, observing him gazing upwards, bids him again to cast his eyes below, and see how he has turned; he beholds the progress he has made through the sublime spheres, and again Beatrice displaying sweeter smile and greater beauty along with a supernatural power in her eyes—they are borne into the ninth heaven, of which she shows him the

nature and properties, reproving the general perverseness of man; she inveighs against man's lust of gold, in which he lives immersed, and which blights the goodly buds of his nature,—Faith and innocence being only seen in children,—adding that all the wrongs in the human family, all arise from there being no ruler on earth, but foreboding at the same time, changes of fortune—a day when the public vessel will proceed onwards, bearing the good fruits long expected. Dante's soul continuing to gather fresh power from the fair eyes of his lady; he is now permitted to behold the Divine Essence; he is vouchsafed a sight of the deity, described as a dazzling point from whence flashes such a light, that he on whom it turns its burning glow must close his sight. He then sees in three hierarchies, the nine choirs or orders of angels, who correspond to the nine heavens, over which they respectively preside. Beatrice, beholds in the mirror of divine truth, that doubts have entered the mind of Dante; she explains to him the object of God, in creating the angels and inferior beings, stating that He delighted to multiply images of Himself. She then digresses into a vehement reprehension of theologians and preachers of those days who speculated on their functions, and substituted abstruse questions for the pure words of the gospel,—preachers going forth with quibbles and buffooneries, while every imposture spreading abroad the hand of holy promise, finds a throng of credulous fools. After thus inveighing against the popes for their inventions of pardons and indulgences, Beatrice dwells on the pure primal light of the Almighty shedding his splendours with

grace multiplied on men, wherein He parts with Himself, while He remaineth One as before.

Dante is subsequently taken up with Beatrice into the empyrean. Now, her beauty transcends all human sense; no mortal power could describe, her celestial loveliness. His sight is armed with fresh vigour. He finds himself before an immense stream of pure light: (*Thronus ejus flammæ ignis: rotæ ejus ignis accensus. Fluvius igneus rapidusque egrediebatur a facie ejus.* Daniel vii.) and beholds the ineffable spectacle of the triumphing heavenly militia, with its divine glory and ravishing splendour. The streams of light, the moving topazes, twinkling sparks, falling, on smiling flowers, are the angels and souls of the blessed who appear in their real, more resplendent forms to the poet, when at the bidding of Beatrice, he has drank of the sacred stream. All the saints of the ancient and new testament, clad in snow white robes, are seated on thousands of thrones of light, arranged in the shape of a vast dazzling rose, the eternal light being in the centre. The poet contemplates, and describes with delight, the boundless heavenly Rose, and seeking for some knowledge from his beloved lady's lips,—he looks round for her, but sees an old man, clothed in effulgence and of a venerable, benignant mien; but where is she? exclaims Dante. The venerable figure, replies that he has been summoned by Beatrice to aid him in his anxious state; and the poet looking up, he beholds *her* within the most exalted circle, with a wreath on her brow reflecting eternal beams; he addresses to her a prayer of fervent thanks and grateful love, upon which she looked on him smiling, although so far removed.

Afterwards the majestic saint and new guide, who proves to be St. Bernard, invites the poet to the contemplation of the queen of Heaven, of Mary, who seated on a throne, at the glowing summit of the first circle of the Rose, commands the whole celestial court, surrounded by thousands of joyful angels celebrating the virgin's glory in rapturous songs. The poet learns from his new guide the different degrees occupied by the various saints, and obtains from him all the information which he had hitherto received from Beatrice. St. Bernard points out to him a host of blessed souls, the Virgin Mary, and finally Lucia, whom the poet's lady had sent to him when his eyes were closed on the edge of ruin.

The poet's most anxious desire is to behold our Saviour. Such a felicity must be obtained through the grace and power of the queen of Heaven, and St. Bernard, the most faithful, the most tender and devoted servant of the Virgin Mary, supplicates her, humbly, that Dante may have grace given him to contemplate the brightness of divine majesty, so that he may, with his feeble organs, sustain the dazzling august face, without falling to dust. Here the last limit in the realm of human art seems to be attained. It is a most solemn moment, in the midst of the harmonies and splendours of Heaven: All the Saints and Beatrice, in a fervent mood, with clasped hands, listen with their hearts to the prayer addressed to Mary. The divine favour is granted. The poet concentrates his powers of vision on the central burning beam, from whence all light emanates. His memory and language must fail to record all the wonders he beheld: he endeavours, nevertheless, to relate

what remains in him from his gaze on the Eternal Beam, that he may leave one sparkle of its glory to the races to come. Such was the splendour of the flame that, had he turned his eyes away, he must have shrunk back, dashed to the earth; but he had received grace to fix the everlasting splendour; he beheld compounded by love, in one sole volume, or form of light, all that is contained in the universal world,—substance, accident and their mode, or properties. And as his admiration is kindled, his vision augmented in power, he perceives in the same point, within the same essence—glorious, and at an immense depth—three circles, equal in the measurement, but of a different hue; the second of these circles reflects the spendour of the first, and the third reflects a splendour emanating from the two others. The second circle when stedfastly observed, offers, in its own colours, our own image; a human effigy; it is God, the divine Trinity—the great christian mystery—manifesting themselves to the senses of a man through a miracle unexampled. The poet aspires at understanding how the human effigy has been incarnated in a circle; but the poem concludes by the following simple words, which simplicity is in admirable character with the solemn grandeur of the subject, and so well rendered in Mr. Wright's admirable translation:—

Ma non eran da cio le proprie penne;
Se non che la mia mente fu percossa
Da un fulgore, in che sua voglia venne.

All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa!
Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il velle,
Sì come ruota che igualmente è mossa,

L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

But vainly my own wings to this aspired;
When such a splendour struck me from above,
It straight accomplished all I had desired.
The glorious vision here my powers o'ercame;
But now my will and wish were swayed by love—
(As turns a wheel on every side the same,)
Love—at whose word the sun and planet move.

(Wright's Trans.)

The poet, is initiated; his wings fall; his yearnings have been satisfied;—his will is calmed, concentrated and merged in the eternal will.

Such is the main and real action of the Divine Comedy in its admirable unity. Nothing in the domain of art can be simpler, although so sublime. A man is suddenly wafted away from the sorrows, struggles, and passions of earthly life, and by a special grace is transferred, during seven days, into an invisible world. We have seen him penetrating the infernal abyss, glide along the shaggy loins of Satan, go through the centre of the earth, appear in the other hemisphere, climb heavily over the mountain of purgatory, traverse with the rapidity of lightning the heavenly regions, and pause only when reposing, regenerated, in the divine essence! It is the loftiest, the most boundless, marvellous, and homogeneous creation that has ever been conceived by human thought. The Divine Comedy is, as stated before, a philosophical and religious work, and the martial as well as republican epic of mediæval Italy. The plan of the Paradise is as profoundly studied and conceived as that of the other two parts of the poem. The greatest harmony exists between the development of the main action, and the

progressive movement of the philosophical accessories. As the poet ascends gradually from the dark centre of the earth to the pure and resplendent regions of the empyrean, science rises with him from the simplest elements of natural history to the highest conceptions of theology. The artist-poet seems, as he proceeds in the construction of his work, to delight in adorning it with fresh beauties, thousands of precious gems, new exquisite chisellings; so much, the scientific ornaments and picturesque digressions detach themselves clearly from the main action of the epic. In the subterranean part of the poem, the reader meets with fragments of geology, meteorological observations, curious notions on the elements, on the volcanos, on the properties of stones and metals. In the Purgatory are seen prevailing, botany and physiology; all the questions relating to the animal and vegetable kingdoms being treated dogmatically, or submitted to comparisons and images. But astronomy, metaphysics, theology and its sublime mysteries, are naturally placed in the Paradise; poetry and science thus moving harmoniously in the same order, with an equal pace, and thus investing the poem with unparalleled beauties.

The *Paradiso*, with its strange beauties, its streams of light, and its myriads of gems and dazzling stars, displays the poet's genius in its zenith. On the whole, greater poetical treasures have been lavished upon it, than on the other parts of the poem; and, nevertheless, it has long been almost unread out of Italy; where, on the contrary, the third *cantica* has been generally studied, *con amore*, and not unfrequently pre-

ferred to the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, by the most competent judges. It cannot be doubted that the influence of religious convictions must affect the appreciation of the Paradise; and that protestantism, as well as scepticism, must experience a shadow of intuitive repugnance for its catholic splendours, unless the student of Dante, can divest himself from his personal ideas as well as from his subjective tendencies, in order to identify himself exclusively, for the time being, with the age, soul, and genius of the poet. The *Inferno* has generally been considered as the most powerful portion of the poem, exhibiting the fresh and unwasted strength of the poet to a superior degree; it certainly displays a terrible energy of genius, smiting our soul as with a thunderbolt: the *Purgatorio*, however, contains a greater number of fine passages; its air is so exquisitely serene that many students, we have found, return to it oftener than to the other portions of the poem. Its effect, moreover, must be tenfold more potent, when the reader emerges into it, from all the horrors of hell, happy to be no longer stifled by its murky vapours; when he beholds again the mild stars, breathes freely in the sweet air, listens to the sweet words of penitence and hope. But in the *Paradiso* we behold the consummation of all good—the triumph of infinite compassion—the joy of redeemed, released, eternally happy spirits; they have endured the trial, and are reaping the reward in the company of the wisest and best of earth, and under the guidance of the highest in heaven. Such are, to our mind, the characteristic features from which arise the poetic splendours of the Paradise,

although, no doubt, it is too full of learning, mysteries, and subtle discussions. On the other hand, it is scarcely just to isolate any of the three parts of the poem, in order to weigh them separately in the critical balance; for, although the tone of each part is so different from that of the others, they are all most essentially, manifestly necessary to complete the idea of Dante, and exhibit, in its plenitude, his artistical powers, all embodied in that song which for these five hundred years has been touching the hearts of men, and is at this day as fresh as at the beginning. When shall its melody die away, "be lost in silence and forgot?"

CHAPTER XI.

Symmetry and perfection of the *Divina Commedia*.—Flexibility of its style.—Characteristics of epic poetry.—The classics and the romantics.—Versification of the ancients and moderns.—Influence of Christianity on epic poetry.—Tasso, Milton, Klopstock, and Dante.—Beatrice and Virgil in the *Divina Commedia*.—Symbols and allegories of the poem.—Various dates and conjectures as to its composition.—Popularity of visions and supernatural voyages during the middle ages.—The vision related by Gregory of Tours.—Visions during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.—The Purgatory of St. Patrick.—Vision of St. Paul in Provencal.—Vision of Alberic.—Its popularity.—Vision of a monk in 1300.—Influence of those visions on Dante.—Object and motives of his poem.—Beatrice considered as the symbol of theology.—Reality of her presence in the poem.—Theological and philosophical doctrines of the *Divina Commedia*.

THE *Divina Commedia* is composed of hundred cantos: one for the general introduction, and thirty-three,—mystical number of the years of our Saviour Jesus Christ,—for each of the three parts. The whole poem contains fourteen thousand two hundred and thirty verses, and such is the symmetry in their repartition that the *Inferno* has only thirty verses less than the *Purgatorio*, and the latter only six less than the *Paradiso*. All the cantos are not only connected with each other by the progressive development of the action and epic movement, but also by passages skilfully arranged, which form a link between the close of one canto with the commencement of the other. The three parts commence with a poetical comparison borrowed from navigators; in the first it is the shipwrecked, who pauses breathless on the

beach in order to cast a glance over the sea; in the second, the poet unfurls his sails to be wafted over more propitious waters; in the third, he recommends to the adventurous spirits, who have dared to venture after him, to direct their frail skiff on the trace of his own bark, launched over the waves of an immense ocean, which no man has ever explored. The last verse of each part of the poem ends with the word *star* (*stelle*), symbolic object of the prodigious voyage of the Christian poet, and of his ardent aspirations. It would be endless to note all the details of artistical symmetry to be discovered in the gigantic work. A persevering study of the poem awakes a sympathy for those unceasing exclusive admirations and perpetual returns to Dante, numerous instances of which are to be met with not only in Italy but in Europe; the marvellous patience, the deep love, the minute care, with which the least of these details are wrought, are almost unparalleled. There is not an image, not a word, not one line thrown at random, or without an earnestness of purpose. Great unity in the general plan, along with an infinite variety in the details; such is the artistical secret of the great artists of the middle ages, and above all, of Dante; the greatness of his ideas, and his delicate perfection of execution have invested his poem with the same wonderful characteristic beauties as the great Gothic cathedrals.

The dramatic design of the poem never ceases to be clearly perceptible in the midst of the most luxuriant poetic richness. No human being, excepting Shakspere, has ever displayed such a profound knowledge of the human heart, in

such a series of scenes,—alternately stern and awful, tender and melancholy—or splendid and grotesque, for, a comical sarcastic humour, is also one of the elements of this extraordinary composition; and, nothing can be more prodigious than the flexibility of this poetry; although concise, energetic and terrestial,—it nevertheless transforms itself three times, in order to describe the three worlds that await man after his earthly life. Nothing can be more fearful than the language describing the dark regions, abode of eternal sufferings; afterwards, it reflects the twilight, as well as the gentle pious melancholy of those other regions of expiation, in which the wounds that can be healed are mercifully closed; and then, in its progressive elevation from heaven to heaven—through innumerable blazing suns—it becomes of a surpassing splendour, burning with an ardour ever purer, till it vanishes beyond the limits of space in the very essence and source of light—in increated love! We have seen, how in these invisible worlds, Dante has introduced human events—men with all their passions, and how he, at times, characterizes them with one word—one of those words that produce a lasting commotion in the inmost core of our soul; how, at other times, in a few simple, mysterious verses, he reveals a whole lamentable drama; finally, how, in the midst of the tempestuous explosions of his genius, when apparently absorbed by the profoundest thoughts, he suddenly returns to nature, and depicts her most lovely aspects,—her most delicate shades, with a surpassing richness and variety of colour.

An epic, whether ancient or modern, cannot be

considered as complete, unless it embraces the whole of man in his double nature, spiritual and earthly, thus revealing to him his origin and his end, through the emotions of a great drama; an epic, therefore, is formed of two parts, intimately connected, one of which refers to material wants, and the other to the vague aspirations of the mind, the former being developed in the world of the senses, and the other in the invisible regions. At all times the instinct of immortality has lived in the depth of human conscience; at all times, the human imagination has given mysterious and supernatural inhabitants to infinite space; the ancient poems have been subject to this absolute and indispensable rule, but with this difference, that in the pagan creeds, the human destiny was limited as to time, and the idea of another life being enveloped in thick clouds, the main action of the poem had the earth for its stage—the Divinity entervening in the affairs of this world either through an immediate co-operation, and then the gods came down upon earth as in the Iliad,—or the intervention of the divinity was manifested by advice and information, in which case man descended into the infernal regions, as in the Odyssey. Such was the supernatural and spiritual portion of the epic which has given birth to the puerile rhetorical theory of the *marvellous* source of so many miserable abortive compositions. Dante has been the first, and will probably remain the last also, who has felt and comprehended that, poetical art, must be consistent with religion. He has boldly transferred the scene of action of his poem in the other life; the sorrows and felicities, the pas-

sions and hopes—all the interests of this world, are, as it were, reflected in it, and merely connected with the main subject as so many episodes, for, in a Christian point of view, our world and the few years that man is doomed to spend on it, are but a shadow, a grain of sand with reference to the unlimited infinite, as well as to the boundless blessings of an eternal life. Dante's poem fills the space between the creation of the first man, and the gloomy shades of the last judgment; it represents humanity.

Endless discussions have been wasted with reference to the style and form of the poem; the great question referred to the genus of the poem, whether it was really an epic according to the Aristotlean law, or not, whether, on the contrary, it was an irregular, fanciful work of imagination, and also, to the singularity of so grave and austere a subject being entitled *Commedia*. Such has been the source of a virulent polemic, of a mass of attacks and apologies which have continued during ages, we may say, down to our own time. During the great disputes so often revived between the partisans of classicism and those of romanticism, Dante has naturally been one of the great bulwarks of the latter. The greatest of those literary contentions, and by no means the least acrimonious, was the Germanic controversy headed by A. W. Schlegel, on the part of the romanticists, and by Voss in the rival camp; it was on this occasion that appeared Schlegel's acute criticisms as well as admirable exposition of the modern genius represented by Dante, Calderon and Shakspere. As to the rigid signification of epic poetry, Aristotle's defini-

tion is after all, the most generally accepted. According to his rules, the tragic and the epic form but one; they both obey the same laws; they both offer the same unity in the action,—the same elevation of style,—the same probability in the characters,—the same plot, and the same end, with this exception, that the former remains confined in its action, within the limits of twenty-four hours, whilst the latter being more extensive in its nature with episodes more fully developed, has no limit of time imposed in any way whatever. With Aristotle, an epic poem is a spoken drama, and tragedy a drama represented. Thus, the epic poet has not much to say in his own name; his business is more to announce,—to introduce his personages, and then, to withdraw in the shade; the Iliad and the Odyssey therefore, are two tragedies, or, two distinct parts of one only, connected by the object of the action. Dante gives with a particular precision the name of tragedies to the heroic poems of Homer and Virgil, whilst he has entitled his own poem *Commedia;* posterity has accepted and consecrated the title of *Divina Commedia;* the first edition in which is found the title of Divine Comedy given to the poem, is from Venice, 1516; a previous edition bears the following title: *Comincia la prima parte chiamata Inferno della Commedia del Venerabile poeta Dante Alighieri, nobile cittadino Fiorentino.*

The Greek and Latin languages were in possession of the hexameter, the artificial combination and symmetrical cadence of which—distinct from the spoken language—had something noble and majestic, admirably adapted to

the tone and language attributed to the gods, demigods and heroes; it was therefore called the heroic verse; and this heroic or tragical style was one of pure convention, in opposition to the comic style destined to depict the vices, ridicules and manners of men. But the modern languages differ essentially from the ancient in their laws of prosody and rhetoric; they really have no heroic verse; this absence of a special heroic language arises from the revolution in the manners effected by Christianity. After Christianity we no longer see any heroes; we behold man. The principles of fraternity and charity proclaimed by the gospel, banished from the domain of art all pompous fallacies,—all solemn exaggerations; in the eyes of the Christian, all men are equal, the humblest being the greatest in the eyes of God. Moreover, with reference to the infinite Being, all Christians, without distinction, must worship Him without comprehending Him; it is not in our power to define Him, and, to bring Him down in our poems and dramas, as a common personage,—to suppose Him to speak and act like a common mortal, would be at once, outrageous, absurd and impious. Christian poetry does not admit the heroic style; and the modern versification, with its rythm consisting chiefly of the accent with the cesura has nothing in common with the hexameter of the ancients. Tragedy and the Homeric epic, are essentially pagan in their form; all the modern epic poets, with the exception of Dante, have more or less copied, or imitated, the Iliad; Milton, Klopstock and Tasso, have, it is true, selected Christian subjects, but in the development of them, have adhered to the

pagan form. Tasso especially, in his efforts to invest his versification with all the majesty and splendour of the heroic verse, has fallen into pompous, unnatural exaggerations; this tendency alone has been the source of all the defects that could be pointed out in his *Gerusalemme*, which nevertheless, is one of the greatest productions of modern genius; it was this incongruous combination which called forth from Boileau the unjust expression of the *clinquant du Tasse*. Tasso, on the other hand, harrowed by endless sorrows and persecutions, has rarely been in the full possession of the calmness of mind, more than all indispensable for the completion of a work of art. For the marvellous portion of his poem, he had recourse to magic, namely—to that which is false, and the metaphysical part of the dramatic action of his poem is founded on the eternal contrast of good and evil. The demons and angels of the modern poems do not satisfactorily take the place of the Homeric divinities; the gods of the ancients are all subject to fatality, and, when they intervene in the passions and struggles of mortals, it is impossible to anticipate on which side victory will remain, whilst we always know that the angel will, in the end, triumph over the demon, which annuls the dramatic interest. The God of Tasso speaks to Gabriel, as Jupiter might address Mercury, whilst Dante has never endeavoured to make God speak in his verses; when he gradually elevates himself towards the Infinite Being, he contemplates Him one moment, in His pure essence of light and love, and then, falls prostrate, struck by the splendour of the divine Majesty.

The *Divina Commedia*, being divided in three parts: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, in the idea of the poet, it is a triple or triad—it is the image of the Deity. We have seen his belief in the mysterious influence of the numbers *three* and *nine*, with reference to his own earthly destiny. The same numbers are constantly reproduced in the poem with their mystical signification; three principal personages correspond to the three parts—Dante, Virgil, Beatrice. The Hell has nine circles, the Purgatory nine degrees, the Paradise nine spheres. Homer, does not appear himself in his epic, excepting perhaps, through his invocation to the muse; he seems almost desirous to persuade men at large that his poem has fallen from the Olympus. Milton, in skilful and affecting digressions introduces his own person, in broodings over his sorrows and misfortunes; but Dante has introduced the *self* in the dramatic action of his poem, and he has done so with the most consummate art, in order to initiate us to the sentiments, emotions,—to the most intimate agitations of human nature. He, by degrees raises himself, from the deepest of our earthly dust, to the contemplation of the eternal triumph; and he is conducted by his beloved, divine Beatrice, the protecting, merciful angel, who, having illuminated him on earth with a ray of celestial glory, had fled to the realm of her Creator. Beatrice, as she is defined by the poet, certainly appears the most exquisite manifestation of divine power; she seems the light placed by God between truth and intelligence. But, it has often been observed by commentators, why give Virgil such an important part in a poem eminently Christian

and religious? Why not select in preference, one of the sages of antiquity, one of the prophets, or still better, one of the great saints? It appears, to have been overlooked, that Virgil responds to the great idea of moral and political unity, which forms the principal basis of Dante's poem. Virgil was the poet of the Roman empire; he represented the ancient creed in its most ideal dogma and the form of government theoretically adopted by the Ghibellins; his political importance was therefore pre-eminent in the eyes of the Florentine poet. With reference to religion, Virgil had prophesied the coming of the Son of God; at least, it was generally believed; he has generally been considered as a Christian before Christianity; and, the emperor Constantine at the council of Nicea proposed that Virgil should be recognized as a Christian. The Latin poet, moreover, has not followed the ideas and principles of one sole master, school or sect; he collected all the religious and philosophical traditions—all the popular legends of the ancients, and his Hell comes the nearest of all to Christian ideas. In the Italian poem, therefore, he is the expression of the last limit to which human reason can attain—out of the circle of divine grace—and he is selected as the representative of a doctrine which admits the perfectibility of the human race in our world, and which promises to the soul, purified by expiation, a paradise on earth. Virgil, it is seen, justly represents all the possible perfection of the ancient world, and the threshold of the modern ages; he is the highest expression of human science and of human mind; but, over and above him, there is Beatrice, as beyond man there is

God. Such being his prominent part and influence, it would be puerile to attach great and undue importance to the minor instances of ideas, comparisons and expressions of the *Divina Commedia*, which may be considered as imitations of the Latin poet; moreover, Dante, with nobleness and modesty, exaggerates almost the benefits he has derived from Virgil, when, suddenly finding himself in his presence; he exclaims with the tenderness of a son and the pride of a conqueror: "Thou art my master, thou art my maker; I have studied thy book, with patience, with love, and I have taken from thee this beautiful style, which has been my glory."

One of the greatest subjects of controversy with reference to Dante's poem, has been the distinction between reality and symbol. That symbols and allegories have been introduced cannot be contested, the poet himself has explicitly stated so, on several occasions in his Dedications, in his minor works, and in several parts of the poem. We have seen that the *Convito* was destined to be a commentary on the *Divina Commedia;* there is every reason to believe, that his soul, alive to every presentiment on the subject, dreaded the future interpreters of his work; and that he carried into the grave with him, the bitter conviction that the offspring of his genius and labours, was left to be lacerated by all petty, heartless controversists, and become a prey to the dark swarm of crows ready to tear the heart of the poet, still warm and palpitating. No doubt, there is a lofty and profound allegory in the verses of this great trilogy; but, as it has already been observed, and it will be necessary to

do so again, the literal sense must not be confounded with the allegorical—the subject with the accessories—the reality with the myth. A vast number of interpreters and commentators have made laborious researches to discover mysteries where there were none, and have neglected the natural explanation in order to pursue their chimerical object. The truth is, we believe, that a poem is impossible without a genuine action. If the terrible and harrowing journey of the poet is a mere miserable artificial exhibition—if the Christian poet's soul has not really descended into the infernal regions—if he has not clung to the rocks of purgatory—if, impelled by the divine power, he has not really darted through the orbs of heaven—if all the sobs, burning tears, ineffable felicities he describes—if all, are mere ingenious metaphors, double meanings, obscure riddles, for the amusement of pedants, the whole interest of the drama has vanished, its influence and greatness are a dead letter! But, no! humanity cannot be deceived; if the poem were the mere work of a dream—a quiet vision of symbols,—in short, an artificial production of the imagination, instead of being the incarnation, as it were, of a mighty, lofty soul, the *Divina Commedia* could never have found its way in the heart of man; it would be void of truth and of evidence, consequently of the supreme laws of art: the poem, instead of being animated by faith, representing a dogma, and being the offspring of ecstasy, would fall from such heights into the domain of imagination, hypothesis, and revery.

Dante, we have seen, found himself early in life instinctively dissatisfied and restless within

the narrow circle of the poetry of his time. Despite the bad taste of some of his lyrical compositions, he would still remain the first poet of his age if he had not left anything beyond his minor poems. He would not, however, be the first in that style of poetry; that glory belongs to Petrarch; but his impressions, his inspirations, his ideas wafted him incessantly into new regions, wider spaces; his thoughts and his imagination carried him off into another world; he required a new poetry. His genius was early fixed on the theme which, with time and labour, after successive and repeated modifications, gradually became the *Divina Commedia*. A few observations on the preludes of this great conception cannot be void of interest, nor of a certain literary importance. It was a current tradition during the fifteenth century that Dante had, when very young, commenced a rough outline of his poem. There is an allusion on the subject in his letter to brother Ilario, the monk of the abbey of Corvo. Filelfo, towards the middle of the fifteenth century,—could still hear and treasure up many feeble echoes of the traditions relating to Dante, and he affirms positively that Dante commenced his poem, when he was twenty-one years old, namely, in the year 1286 or 1287. With whatever reserve his assertion must be received, there are several indications and corroborations which tend to invest it with a certain character of accuracy. A great number of enthusiastic Italian investigators have fixed unhesitatingly on the year 1289, the twenty-fourth of his age, as the period during which the vague thought or idea of the trilogy gleamed

forth, as it is supposed, for the first time. It was the year during which the imagination of Dante received several ineffaceable impressions; they became transformed into poetical conceptions destined to reappear under the most splendid forms. It was in that year that he fought at the battle of Campaldino, when, amidst varied emotions, must have arisen the idea of the extraordinary passage of the fifth canto of the Purgatory, in which he relates the death of Buon Conte da Montefeltro. It may be remembered that this general of the enemies was slain during the battle, and that his body could never be found. The mysterious circumstance had a great effect on the imagination, and Dante subsequently explained it. It was also during the year 1289 that Ravenna became the scene of the adventure of Francesca of Rimini, and Pisa that of the awful end of Ugolino, and both must have created in the poet emotions of such an unearthly nature to which the soft, faded poetry of the day could give no expression. Finally, and above all, the death of Beatrice, which soon followed those terrible adventures, exalted in the poet's soul the yearning towards the accomplishing of something great and noble in poetry and in the language of his fatherland.

The precise date, however, of the composition or conception of the poem may be considered as of no great relative import; the form adopted by the poet, on the contrary, is a subject that has excited the greatest curiosity and interest. The form of vision was the most favourably adapted to his genius and imagination. He had under

his eyes a consecrated popular type of it; his object was more especially to extend it and elevate it to a level with his own genius. This form, above all, gave him a free scope to unite and combine in one same sphere the infinite variety of subjects and ideas, which it was his earnest absorbing intention to introduce in it. A great number of unecessary dissertations have been written on the supposed originality of the fundamental fiction of the Divine Comedy. Commentators who could not have any knowledge of the spirit of the middle ages, nor of the literature of the period, have extolled the form of the poem, the invention of the subject, as the greatest proof of the poetical originality of Dante; others, have imagined that he was the first modern poet who selected for the subject of a poetical composition, an ideal voyage into the regions of the supernatural world of Christianity. But far from this;—this fiction of Dante, which forms the main spring of the whole poem—considered in a vague, general point of view—was one of the most popular, common ideas of this long mediæval period; it was one of those favourite, plain subjects, the most commonly treated and reproduced by the popular or erudite poets, who preceded those of the modern school. Moreover, it would probably be difficult to find one of the Christian nations of Europe among whom could not be found some fiction or other, founded on this same idea of some mysterious journey in the other world, or some narrative, or tradition, more or less marvellous, of an unearthly voyage into Hell, Purgatory or Paradise.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were

especially characterized by a general tendency towards ideas of another life, and religious reveries ; fantastical excursions, terrible visions, unnatural apparitions, became the natural result of such a propensity. A great number of solitaries revealed the visions and dreams that had visited them. These visions and unearthly dreams have not often, probably, been written down by those who could relate their visitation, but there must have been abundance of men who consigned them on paper with exaggerations, embellishments, and descriptions the most calculated to strike the imaginations. It was not unusual also, in those ages, to be subject to visions when perfectly awake. There is every reason to believe, that in convents and ecclesiastical corporations, the superiors or chiefs, for instance, had recourse to such visions themselves, or caused them to take place, on various circumstances, when they conceived themselves justified, to edify wild, savage natures by such means; or, when they wished to terrify the imagination of those over whom it was their advantage to exercise an absolute control. Perhaps the most ancient of those visions is the one mentioned by Gregory of Tours, in the fourth book of his history. He relates, that in the year 571, a monk of a monastery of Auvergne, whose name was Sunniulfus, used to delight in relating a vision that had visited him; and he seems, moreover, to have been personally acquainted with him. This monk affirmed, that his spirit had been transported into hell, where he beheld the terrible sufferings of the guilty. One of the circumstances, especially, of this vision is analogous to what we see in the *Inferno*.

He had beheld a river of fire, to one of the shores of which ran, incessantly, swarms of human creatures, who rushed and plunged into the burning river, where they remained writhing, but in unequal depths; some being in this liquid fire up to the waist, others to the shoulders, and others to the chin.

Since that period, every age has been productive of visions, many of which have remained in the state of traditions, whilst others have been written. We must say a few words only, on the principal among them. The next vision, we believe, to that mentioned by Gregory of Tours, belongs to the year 679, or, 680; it is attributed to an hermit of the environs of Pistoïa, named Barontus, or, Barento, who had been a wealthy noble, and had lived in great dissipation. His vision is frequently quoted in the chronicles of the ninth century, and is characterized by all the causes and singularities of similar fictions: he also penetrates into the infernal regions; subsequently, into paradise: but no mention is made of the purgatory. Another similar vision happened in Suabia, in the year 824, to another monk, of the name of Wettin; it was written under his dictation whilst laying on a bed of sickness, probably at intervals of epilepsy, by another monk of the same convent, and was sometime after, translated into Latin verses, by Walafried Strabo, one of the most popular and celebrated Latin versifiers of that age.

During the following century appeared several marvellous narratives of excursions into the other world, namely, that of another monk named Rogers, and another, by a young girl of the

neighbourhood of Reims, who, having been mysteriously carried off in heaven, and immediately after into hell, related all the felicities of the former and the sufferings of the latter, which she had witnessed. The celebrated fiction of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick, in Ireland, belongs to the same order of ideas; there exists a great number of written accounts of this fiction in French, German, and English; some being in prose and others in verse: it is supposed that the original document of all these imitations was written in Latin by a monk of the abbey of Sultrey. Matthew Paris, who wrote his history towards the middle of the thirteenth century, has introduced as a real event, happening in the year 1152,—an event in which he had himself an implicit faith,—the miraculous visit of a Gallic knight to the purgatory of Saint Patrick. This knight, having been a great sinner, became repentant, and obtained his pardon on the condition of visiting the well of Saint Patrick. The awful ordeal required a supernatural courage, but he accomplished it valiantly and successfully, and related, on his return, all he had seen in the other world—hell and purgatory—and further, the earthly paradise, having only attained the threshold of the real paradise, without daring to go beyond. No doubt, Matthew Paris had a peculiar taste for those fantastical pictures of the other world, for, he relates another of the year 1196, which has no connexion whatever with the preceding one, as it was an English monk this time, named Evesham, whose spirit visited hell, purgatory, and paradise. With reference to the purgatory of Saint Patrick, it is more especially

known to the British public, in consequence of the work of Mr. Thomas Wright, on the Legends of Purgatory, Hell, and Paradise, current during the middle ages.

Hitherto, all these visions of the other world had, undoubtedly, been originally composed in Latin, and later only, were successively translated into the vernacular idioms of the various countries: one of them only, bears every trace and appearance of having been originally written in a popular idiom, namely, in Provençal: it is a free, fantastical amplification of the vision of St. Paul, who, it is well known, was transported in idea into heaven during his lifetime; but in the Provençal vision, St. Paul visits also the infernal regions; he explores them under the guidance of the archangel Michael, who points out to him their various subdivisions, and the different classes of sinners, who suffer chastisements appropriated to their sins. There is no mention of the purgatory, and it is one of the many singularities of this vision, which, on the whole, abounds with bold ideas and vivid descriptions. It has been analysed by A. W. Schlegel and Fauriel, in their works on the Provençal poetry.

But the vision which has excited the greatest curiosity with reference to its supposed influence on Dante, is that of a monk named Alberic, of the Monte-Cassino, who took care to write all that passed before him during his visionary state, the manuscript of which was discovered in that convent in 1809. This vision, during which the monk conceived himself to have been conducted by St. Peter into hell, purgatory, and paradise, had been copied several times by various individuals during the first part of the twelfth century.

It is naturally supposed, that as Dante had twice performed the journey to Naples, before his exile, on diplomatic missions, that he must have heard the vision of Alberic spoken of, and perhaps had carefully read it. The whole of this, however, is only conjectural, and by no means deserving of the argumentative discussions to which it has given rise—this vision, so long buried under the dust of the Monte-Cassino, but now very well known in Italy—for, if Dante was cognizant of this *de Visione Suâ*, of the monk Alberic, it could not add much to all he must have known on the subject of all the others; and if he was ignorant of it, it could not tend to enhance the idea of his inventive genius, since such visions were most common and popular during the middle ages. We have another proof of their being so general, in the preface of one of the transcribers of the *de Visione Suâ*, in which, endeavouring to conciliate the belief of the readers to the wonderful things which he is directed to relate, he says, "What we are relating is neither incredible nor new: this thing which God has been willing to manifest miraculously in our time, is a thing already well known by the frequent narratives, and by the frequent examples of the holy fathers." This is an evident allusion to many other visions similar to that of Alberic.

One more instance of this great popularity of supernatural visions in the age of Dante,—and this last one, which we will mention from the Florentine chronicler, is the more striking, as it took place on the very same year which Dante himself has selected for the date of his own vision; it is a most fantastical adventure, and it

excited the greatest sensation in the whole of Italy. In 1300, a monk of Modena suddenly fell down insensible; he continued to give no signs of life, although everything was done for the recovery of his senses; his body was kept the usual time, after which every preparation was made for his burial. He was, therefore, carried to his grave, stretched on his coffin in his monastic dress, uncovered, as it is usual in Italy to this very day, and borne by four of his brother monks; others were following, praying and singing; they were close to the grave when the dead monk came to life again, he sat up, extended mechanically his arms to disentangle himself, and in this movement, one of his hands falling on the head of one of the bearers of the coffin, he pressed his head and took off his hood; this poor monk terrified on finding himself thus treated by a corpse, fell down dead, but really dead, whilst the other being thus returned from the other world, related all the wonders he had beheld; his supernatural visit was universally believed, and the conclusion so fatal to the coffin-bearer seemed the natural sequel to a miraculous event by which the Deity seemed inclined to reveal to men some of the mysteries of eternity.

It is very probable also that such subjects were represented on the stage, such as it was at that period. John Villani relates that when the Cardinal Legate of Boniface VIII. came to Florence in 1304, in order to effect, if possible, a reconciliation between the Whites and the Blacks, the people of that city resolved to honour his arrival by a great festival or representation, which had taken place some time before, when

Florence was flourishing, happy, and in a profound tranquillity. The inhabitants of the municipal district called St. Fridiano, were notorious for the singularity of their revelry and the originality of their inventions. They now imagined to have it proclaimed in the streets, at the sound of trumpets, that all those who were desirous of obtaining news from the other world had only to come at the calends of May, on the bridge *alla Carraia*, or along the Arno. They had constructed on the river, extensive scaffoldings supported by boats of all sizes, and there, by the light of illuminations and glaring lights, they represented various fantastical scenes of hell, in which no horror that could terrify and delight the spectators was spared: the performance was abundantly provided with infernal tortures,—writhings, yellings, and unearthly chastisements. But the wooden bridge cracked, and sunk under the multitude overflowing upon it; a real tragedy ensued: a great number of the spectators were drowned, killed, or frightfully mangled by this fall. After the first impression of affliction that naturally follows such a calamity, it became a current and jocose saying, that the people of the Fridiano district had kept their word, for a great number of persons were actually gone to learn some news of the other world.

Thus, the canvas selected by Dante for his gigantic pictures did not require any labour on his part; he could not hesitate on the subject; it was the most appropriate to the spirit and genius of his age; but, he invested it with all the characteristics of originality, by the manner in which it became expanded and full of grandeur when

grappled by his omnipotent genius. This mass of visions were to Dante's poem, what the acorn is to the most luxuriant majestic oak; they happened fortuitously to be in perfect harmony with his poetical ideas. It would be very rash and presumptuous to suppose that they inspired his genius. On the contrary, there is every probability that with such an unlimited imagination, he was in a measure to create entirely the populations of those unearthly regions; he possessed in abundance, ideas, impressions, remembrances, and associations for each of them, and, if he had not found this idea of imaginary voyages in the invisible world of faith, very popular in his time, he would have been the first, no doubt, to create this form; no other—as observed before—offered him such a field for liberty of action. Many idle conjectures and researches have been made with reference to the petty resemblances of details that may exist and be discovered between the great poem and the many visions that had preceded; both have proved extremely puerile and worthless. Whatever resemblances or imitations have been detected, only refer to words or expressions, which the poet adopted as a kind testimony of respect or admiration for their author, and by no means impelled by necessity; but none of them have the slightest reference to the main ideas—sentiments and inventions of the Florentine poet. It may be, therefore, naturally supposed, that no other poetical style or form could have been adequate to his vast and varied yearnings; his supernatural voyage, gave a free scope to the sombre and stern portion of his genius; it permitted this same imagination to exhale its ten-

derest, softest emotions—to delight in placid, graceful, pictures of nature, whilst in his delineations of the Christian paradise, he could indulge in his taste for the most abstract or sublime speculations as well as in the mystical tendencies of his thoughts. We have seen the personal motives, the impulses of passion, which may be considered as the incentives to the composition of the *Divina Commedia*, but we have noted also the sentiment, the thought of love—that prevails throughout the poem, and becomes its very soul. The principal object of the poet was evidently to represent his Beatrice, whose appearance on earth had been little more than an evanescent heavenly shadow—in the midst of the splendours of eternal glory. We have mentioned the passage in which he expresses his hope of saying of Beatrice what has never been said of any woman, if he is permitted to live some years longer. Boccaccio observes, also, in his Commentary on Dante, that the latter composed many verses in consequence of the love he bore Beatrice, and in her honour, and that, as he had announced at the close of the *Vita nuova* it was for her also that he undertook the *Divina Commedia*. Such was, therefore, the primitive and principal intention of the poet; and in truth, she appears in every part of the poem as the special providence of the poet—as the object of his tenderest remembrance and of his highest hopes. In the midst of all the apparitions that assail him in the world created by his imagination, she alone, seems always present to his thoughts. The scene at the commencement of the Inferno, when the three blessed ladies come to the assistance of Dante in his distress, has been subject to endless

commentaries; Beatrice has again and again been considered as representing either theology or philosophy, but more especially and generally the former. Beatrice therefore, instead of being a real personage—a human individuality transfigured, would be reduced to the state of a cold, almost trivial allegory, truly incompatible with her pre-eminent influence over the whole action of the poem, as well as with the transcendent sentiment of the poet. Her angelic intervention presents a peculiar and admirable character of Unity: of the three blessed ladies who feel interested in the *salute* of Dante, Beatrice is more deeply so than the others; she seeks Virgil, and sends him to be a guide to him whom she calls her friend, and from that moment, she remains the hovering, protecting power under whose auspices the poet, guilty of human frailties, is to be restored to perfection and virtue. And the adventurous poet is fully aware that Virgil is not to accompany him further than the mountain of Purgatory, and that subsequently, when he reaches its summit, he will behold Beatrice herself, descended from the heavenly realm to guide him through those celestial regions; it is this knowledge, the thought of the blessing awaiting him, that sustain and animate his courage in all the trials of his dreadful peregrinations.

In the twenty-seventh canto of the Purgatory, therefore, Dante finds himself at the entrance of the Paradise; when, with the evident intention of preparing the imagination of the reader to the apparition of Beatrice—as if it were the sole object of his mysterious voyage—he introduces a series of exquisite, mysterious pictures, which

form as many progressive shades, until, in the thirtieth canto, the meeting between the poet and Beatrice takes place: this canto, and the three following cantos, establish an intimate connexion between the design and dramatic action of the *Purgatorio* with those of the *Inferno;* they contribute to the elucidation of the fundamental intention of the whole poem. The details of this meeting abound in exquisite original beauties, all of which tend towards the same idea, the same sentiment that prevails in the whole composition. She upbraids him for having been astray from the path of virtue, and having forgotten her when she was no longer on earth, where, she directed him with her youthful eyes, and encouraged him by her presence: in short, this passage, with so many others, are a perpetual reference to the real events in the poet's life; they are the indisputable expression of his dearest and purest thoughts. The confession of his wrongs, with effusion, but also with reflection and earnestness;—his contrition for having yielded to the human frailty, and his ardent desire of returning to virtue, are testimonies of the original motives of the poem. What can be more explicit on the subject than Beatrice's statement, when, after having noted all she has done to bring back Dante to virtue, she expressly declares, that after having had, vainly, recourse to various means to that effect, she had only an extraordinary marvellous one left, that of showing him Hell and the sufferings of the condemned?

Beatrice is the true heroine of the *Divina Commedia.* We cannot see anything *theological* in that exquisite figure; we cannot discover any

attribute, any legend that can explain such a supposition. The highest poetical interest of the poem has totally vanished if it is bereft of the real, true Beatrice. Is it possible that Dante could apply to theology all the characteristic features of the sweet individuality of his lady-love? Could theology be invested with such ideas, such affections, such forms? The poet speaks of her as of a human being whom he has loved from his very childhood—a human being who had lived on earth, had died, and being raised from earthly flesh into a spirit, was admitted into the celestial beatitude. We have observed that he had loved her in childhood; who can imagine that Dante could fall in love with theology when he was ten years old? Who, in his senses, could apply to theology all the interesting events of the life of Beatrice? They were inspirations of love, and by no means of theology that animated the poet; and, as observed before, all the details in which she enters when she addresses him are all purely historical and faithful; they are graceful, clear, and profound in an historical point of view; they would seem utterly false and obscure if taken allegorically.

It is by the introduction of his personal feelings that Dante's poem has endeared itself to the hearts of men; and whatever expression he has given to those feelings and to his passions, none among them are so predominant, so intense, so pregnant with sublimities, as his pure ideal worship for his guardian angel; it is a heavenly ray bestowed on mortals—it is the most potent in the soul of man. The poet's love is the bright harrowing feature by which he more especially

appertains to human nature—to all ages—to all races and nations. It is, we repeat it, the soul of his poem; whilst his reprobations, his vengeances, the stigmas he inflicts as he proceeds in his supernatural voyage, are the transient, lurid flashes of his genius, when it is not softened by the thought and influence of Beatrice. In this, we conceive, dwells the greatest originality of the poet. When, after the hoary winter of barbarism, spring revives—when the inward sun expands its beneficial rays and warms the world of souls that had been chilled, poetical buds emerge from the hearts of men—they flourish; and these primitive, poetical flowers, it is well known, exhale a fragrance, and are characterized by a peculiar beauty, never to be met with among those that bloom in the subsequent ages. These primitive compositions are less subject to established rules, and to imitations; they are invested with greater originality, a greater power, along with a character of personality, incompatible with the other styles of poetry. The *Divina Commedia* is one of the most striking examples of this literary fact; its language is terse, clear, precise; it reflects the genius of the poet; it conveys with an inimitable conciseness his ideas, sentiments, images; it is more plastic than descriptive. Further, Dante blends with those characteristics all the signs of a profound combination and labour, consequences of the society and civilization in the midst of which he was born; but none of the great primitive poets, no poetical artist—ancient or modern—has ever evinced a spiritual being so illuminated and hallowed, embodied in such a monument; and, therefore, none tend to a moral

elevation as Dante, who pours forth his whole soul into the souls of other mortals.

The theological and philosophical doctrines of the poem may very justly be considered as of a secondary importance; they certainly are not generally considered as the most attractive, although they were peculiarly adapted to the tastes and ideas of the fourteenth century.

Those doctrines, so tedious for the readers of the *Divina Commedia*, in our age, formed together the science of the mediæval period; they had deeply penetrated into the minds and consciences of men; they had become the vital element of society: in short, those doctrines were then governing the world, and Dante, of necessity, introduced them into the picture of his age—into his vast encyclopædia, but which is also, an immortal *confession* of the poet. It must also be borne in mind, that whoever is unable to transfer himself into the spheres of ideas, manners, and creeds, different from those in the midst of which he is fortuitously thrown, lives most imperfectly; his existence is incomplete; he remains insensible to his noblest privilege—that of a thinking, aspiring being! he lives drowned in the boundless ocean of the great progressive multiform life of humanity. With reference to the asperities, excessive metaphors, singularities to be met with in the poem, and several of which have justly been considered as repulsive, they not unfrequently arise from an effort to veil the real sense of a word or expression, under another signification; they are also faults of the age. And, it should be remembered, that an unspotted, immaculate taste is

the result of a long literary culture, among nations whose languages have long been perfected. But those blemishes are nothing more than the transient shades caused by the light running clouds that pass over a splendid landscape; they are common to all the poets with whom commences a new era; they are in the works of genius the spots mentioned by Horace:—

> Ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
> Offendar maculis.

CHAPTER XII.

Character of the genius of Mediæval Italy.—Extent of the knowledge of Dante.—Mythological and classical reminiscences in his poem.—Character of the mythology of his age.—Science of allegories.—Magic and the magicians.—Multiplicity of subjects introduced in the *Divina Commedia*.—Character of the mediæval philosophy.—Albertus Magnus.—Roger Bacon.—Saint Bonaventura; his learning and mysticism.—Saint Thomas Aquinas; magnitude of his labours; his death.—Decline of the Italian philosophy; its various phases.—The Italian universities.—Eastern sources of learning opened to Dante.—Contact of the east with the west.—Indian doctrines and ideas.—Influence of Grecian philosophy on Dante.—Aristotle;—Plato.—Influence of Saint Bonaventura and Saint Thomas.—Mystical tendencies.—Mysticism and Idealism.—Ascetic character of the philosophy of Dante.—Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas.—Formation of the Christian Philosophy.—Mission of Dante.—His method and eclecticism.—His principles of Unity.—Influence of his genius.—Philosophy of History.—Modern commentators.—Orthodoxy of Dante.—Concluding remarks on the character of his genius and its influence.

THE energetic and militant genius of mediæval Italy is, indisputably her pre-eminent characteristic, but more especially in its development and two-fold manifestation. It accomplished the most brilliant and lasting conquests. During the century alone, that preceded the age of Dante, Venetian merchants penetrated, with a prodigious boldness, into the very heart of Asia, and at this very day, there are regions not visited since the fabulous explorations of Marco Polo;—Marino Sanuto informed Europe that Africa was surrounded by the sea; the Pisans conquered the islands of the Mediterranean; Venice and Genoa

were reigning over the Archipelago, and, by a coincidence unparelleled in history, it happened that the twelve ambassadors, sent to Boniface by the various sovereigns of Europe, were all Florentines. The Italian genius shone at the same time in the domain of thought: Leonardo Fibonacci created modern Algebra; Brunetto Latini and others, enlightened their age by their invaluable labours; but, it manifested itself especially by the febrile, restless ardour brought in argumentative contests—in the most formidable exercises of reasoning and of memory. Whilst these extraordinary generations attended to the working and progress of their municipalities, to the consolidation of liberty, they delighted in the passionate discussions of Theses; they exulted in the fiercest theological and philosophical controversies. Aristotle and Plato, St. Augustin and Origen, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, all the most celebrated names in theology and philosophy, were the ideal chiefs and heroes in those intellectual combats; they subsequently became transformed, as it were, into standards, round which the combatants merely rallied in moments of defeat, re-organized themselves to sally forth anew into the argumentative arena. Nevertheless, their supremacy—the gravity of their words, prevail over the philosophical confusion and tumultuous state of this period, when the thinking world was divided between the schools of Guillaume de Champeaux and of Abe'lard. The genius of Dante evinces its superiority in the midst of this intellectual chaos. He certainly adopts with a rigid fidelity the scholastic terminology, but evinces at the same

time his contempt for puerile subtilties and every captious sophistry; he lashes more especially with a mordant irony the elastic portion of Logic denominated syllogism.

In every sphere of human knowledge, Dante has been a subject of investigations and analysis during our age, and they have ever tended to enhance the respect he inspired. In physiology, in natural philosophy, in medicine, he was in advance of his age. The last cantos of the Purgatory are a testimony of his extensive knowledge in natural history; he was acquainted with the action of solar light on the maturation of fruits—with the dormant state of plants—with the circumstances influential over the colour of leaves—with the circulation in the vegetable world. He alludes to the magnetic needle as if it were in common use and perfectly known in his time. He describes with admirable wordings the twinkling of the stars, the vapours formed in combustion, the rainbow, eclipses, the milky way, and several constellations of the austral hemisphere. In the second canto of his Paradise, a catoptric experiment is mentioned. There must have been in his time an elementary and popular astronomy accessible to all, for he frequently introduces in his descriptions the longitudes adopted in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; whilst the seasons are denominated by the astronomical phenomena which accompany them. A general spirit of philosophy prevails through the whole of the *Divina Commedia;* the poet has recourse to the most curious phenomena for comparisons and images which prove as strictly just as they are novel. Does it not appear in the

twenty-seventh canto of the Purgatory that he had a presentiment of many facts connected with magnetism? Does it not contain an allusion to the prophetic intuition—to the direct communication of the human spirit with beings of a superior nature during the sleep or ecstacy? In the same part of the poem he introduces also a profound and exquisite explanation of the instantaneous transition from organic to intelligent life, at the moment when the divine essence establishes a communion with the soul. In truth, the poem is an inexhaustible mine, in which are to be met an abundance of scientific matter, the most abstract ideas, the highest conceptions; and all, require a serious attention as well as an extreme reserve.

We have seen the superiority of Dante as a Christian poet; and, it has appeared highly anomalous, even incongruous, that in a subject and an age so eminently Christian, so many mythological and classical reminiscences, connected with the doctrines of paganism, should have been introduced. Such observations could not have been ventured upon, with a better knowledge of that very age, and a closer attention to the signification of the poem. Mythology was not, during the middle ages, what it has grown since. It was then, a solemn and dangerous subject—a soil still burning with the fire of human passions, which the fathers of the church had conquered inch by inch with heroic efforts, from the fierce partisans of polytheism. A doctrine which had reigned so long over the world could not possibly be wholly eradicated from the hearts and minds of men; it was necessary to

assail it, by pointing out forcibly its most revolting contradictions and grossest errors. An account of the arguments by which the Christian doctors incessantly attacked the assertions of the friends of idolatry, would alone form a voluminous work; they possessed a formidable array of quotations, dates, and arguments: they restored the texts of the Bible, mutilated by the philosophers, to their original sense and purity, illustrating at the same time their ideas and principles, whilst all the great philosophic schools were launching into the world an interminable list of their miracles, and boasted clamorously of the priority of their traditions. A new science emerged from this long and violent polemic, namely, the symbolic and Christian explanation of the tradition of the Gentiles. Paganism evidently had its source in the incapability of the human mind to conceive scientifically the causes of those phenomena, which created feelings of wonder or of terror; hence the irresistible tendency to people the whole universe with beings either hostile or protective, terrible or benevolent: hence, the mysterious relations supposed to exist between man and the superior beings of the invisible world. The attributes of the Deity, as well as the great powers and forces of nature, were worshipped, under an analogous and transparent personification. But in the symbolic science the fable bore the character of a myth; and the idea of the divinity, as well as of the free intelligences, the conception of heavenly meteors acting over the creation under the superintendence of the eternal Providence, remained divested from every material error or any poetical veil. This

science of allegories was highly honored in the age of Dante; he conceived all the advantages his poem would derive from the introduction of the pagan tradition, adopted as a symbol. Mythology was to him, as well as to the most profound theologians, nothing more than a figurative and poetical language—a material emanation of the idea—the common connecting link between the creeds of all ages. The church assailed also, with energy, every class of magic, although this impious folly had formidable representatives and supporters in all the courts of Europe; and the poet gave also a noble and irrefragable testimony of his superiority and of his indomitable courage, by his lofty scorn for the magicians,—by assigning one of the corners of the *Inferno* to those omnipotent impostors, in presence of whom the greatest monarchs of Europe were trembling.

The most abstruse questions—those which belong to the domain of pure reason, as well as those appertaining to the realm of faith—all are enounced and solved in the *Divina Commedia*. The subjects, the most attractive and sacred to man, are freely developed. It forms a complete philosophical and theological system, in which are unfolded, the essence and nature of God—His manfestation in the universe—the motives which determined the Supreme Being to create—the nature and ministry of the intermediary intelligences between God and man—the revolt of a party of the angels—the origin of evil—the creation of man—his primitive innocence—his fall—the incarnation of the Divinity—the redemption—the resurrection—the Divine judgment—the punishments and rewards—the laws

of created beings—their mutual relations and their end. The theology and the philosophy of Dante are closely connected; they can scarcely be said to exist if separated; and, in reality, the whole system may justly be considered as a theological philosophy, of which we must endeavour to give a brief and clear outline.

The violent contests between exclusive sects, or schools of philosophy, form one of the most sad and intricate subjects of study in the intellectual development of Europe. Fortunately, after the contests, came a partial reconciliation, and a tendency towards that unity which is the providential law in all earthly things, the ultimate end of humanity. Europe beheld an eclecticism by which all the greatest powers of human understanding, along with the traditions of the past ages, formed an alliance—a scientific, intellectual union. But this intellectual union had been preceded by many precursors, by general tendencies, and by the noblest individual efforts, when Albertus Magnus (1195—1280) appeared, and gave a great impulse to that eclectic movement. The languages of antiquity and of the east, with all of which he was familiar, became the foundation of his extraordinary intellectual powers; his head was also a wonderful receptacle of the whole circle of sciences then existing; and his great claim to admiration, his chief merit, dwelt more especially, in his immense erudition. Albertus Magnus, on the other hand, endeavoured to probe those regions inaccessible to the human eye, impenetrable to mere human inductions; he endeavoured to discover supernatural agencies that might bring modifications to the great

regular order of phenomena; and this ambition has left a cloud over his name and superior faculties. At about the same period, Roger Bacon (1214—1294), although buried in some obscure English convent, felt deeply impressed by the imperfect state of the studies of his time, by the absence of method, and the general intellectual confusion; he demonstrated the necessity of a reform, laid down its conditions, at the same time that he laboured to give the first example of it in his own labours. This first Bacon had visions of the future, with reference,—to the perfection of methods,—to experimental authority,—in short, on all the questions of science. He embraced the whole wisdom of the ancients, and subjected it to an acute criticism; his genius and meditations did not leave one branch of human knowledge untouched. Philology had also been the subject of his profound studies. A whole century of scientific progress could fairly have been expected from this sole human being. His cotemporaries, amazed at such extraordinary intellectual faculties, gave him the appellation of *Doctor mirabilis;* but subsequently, their admiration turned into odious suspicions. The *Doctor mirabilis* passed his old age in a prison, by order of the general of the Franciscans, deprived of the light of heaven for his last labours; and his manuscripts perished afterwards in the conflagration of a convent.

Towards the same period again, under the more genial sun of southern Italy,—two friends, with kindred pursuits during their laborious existence, who descended into their grave in the same year, illuminated the age in which they

lived:— they were, Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas. The former gifted with a great intellect, proved less laborious, relatively, than loving and meditative; profoundly inclined to contemplative doctrines, he endeavoured to blend them harmoniously and logically, with the legitimate exercise of all the human faculties, affixing to them a somewhat inaccessible mystical crown. Saint Bonaventura, otherwise the *Doctor Seraphicus*, rose to mysterious heights, to which he could not be followed by common humanity; his writings were evidently destined to a public of élite: hundred and fifty years later, they became the consolation of the great Gerson in his solitude. Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) was endowed, it is well known, with the most varied and perfect faculties; he subjected them all to the control of a lofty, meditative reason; his thoughts were more especially absorbed by every metaphysical question, and his logic pre-eminently eclectic and conciliating, raised him to the position of supreme arbiter in the whole realm of thought; he pronounced on all the speculations of his time; he refuted many of the errors of his age, and conscientiously commented the ancients; his speculative pre-occupations far from tending to raise him away from our earthly world, led him on the contrary, to practical studies, and he actually framed a legislation for the government of man,—of the family, and of the city. Thus, the great saint conceived the plan of a vast Encyclopedia of the moral sciences, a complete Catholic philosophy—*Summa totius theologiæ*,—and this colossal monument, magnificent in its general plan and dimensions—abounding with

harmony, despite the apparent asperity of its forms, remained unfinished. Saint Thomas Aquinas was the great initiator to science; he was the oracle of his age, the true angel of the school, and, when the *Doctor Angelicus* came to the close of his earthly career, a universal cry of love and admiration was uttered; floods of earnest tears were shed over his grave.

Those great doctors were the mighty pillars of the great temple of philosophy during the middle ages. It would be unjust and unreasonable to expect them to be wholly free from the ignorance and errors of their age; they were not superhuman; the very blemishes by which they appertain to humanity and to their epoch, become a subject deeply interesting as well as instructive; they tend to enhance our admiration, and, however clouded and impaired their conceptions may be, by the manner in which they are expressed at times, these conceptions lose nothing of their beauty and majesty when the veil of phraseology has been removed; it becomes, on the contrary, a subject of admiration that such splendid constructions could be accomplished with such instruments. Finally, those doctors fulfilled nobly their mission of founders or establishers, as it were, of the sciences. After them, with Raymond Lulli, Duns Scottus, Occam, commences relatively, an era of decline; they were followed by scholasticism, and, about the year 1300, may be considered as the commencement of the decline of the star of mediæval philosophy after its zenith,—of that melancholy moment of the downwards movement, before setting, when its

twinkling brilliancy grows fainter and fainter; it was the time when it was also its destiny to produce the poet who could reflect and immortalize its glory; and, poetry alone is invested with so noble a privilege. Every prose almost—but especially the prose of the dead language then in use—is subject to transformations and corruptions tending to disfigure, often to mutilate, the idea buried in it, whilst poetry, on the contrary, is the glorious form under which the human thought remains incorruptible, with its native purity; it is endowed with the divine privilege of conferring popularity and immortality, and Dante became the immortaliser of the mediæval philosophy in its zenith, when it was menaced by the symptoms of the decay that followed.

The Italian philosophy, offspring of the Pythagorean school was in its very cradle, characterised by a moral tendency and a poetical form. Protected by the statesmen and poets of conquering Rome, Italian philosophy was renovated by the principles of our Redeemer; its vigour and fecundity received a new impulse from the propagation of Christianity. The sixth and seventh centuries beheld a revival of the genius of ancient Rome. Italian philosophy assumed nobler forms, a loftier language; it became replete with harmony, with a tone genial and consoling to humanity, and those characteristics have never changed; the primitive alliance between a moral direction and a poetical form has never been abandoned. This philosophy faithful to this invaluable dualism, continued to flourish during the middle ages. Soon after the period of the

northern invasions, an intellectual movement, propagated by the church, manifested itself; subsequently, England, France and Spain, beheld the regeneration of studies. Bologna became one of the centres of philosophical learning, before the celebrity she derived from her school of jurisprudence; Padoua was equally celebrated, and the rival of Bologna in science and learning. According to Tiraboschi, Milan contained not less than two hundred teachers of Grammar, Logic, Medicine and Philosophy; but none of the Italian cities could be more justly proud of the great number of her learned citizens than Florence; we have seen the intellectual pursuits of the Florentines, in the very midst of the fierceness and miseries of their war and civil dissensions. Many of the greatest men of Florence flourished during that period of agitation, and with them, or immediately after them, the greatest of all, Dante, who became the poet of the philosophy of the thirteenth century. Italy is indebted to Florence for her great bard; for, he belongs in truth to the whole Peninsula. He appeared gifted with the moral instinct—the literary sentiment, along with the faculties for contemplation and activity, all of which formed, as it were, the national stamp of Italy. The poet thus endowed, with a soul so pre-disposed, subsequently developed by the most bitter trials, derived from them, the superior energy, the extraordinary powers, which seem indispensable for human genius, to be enabled to collect together and reflect, or reproduce in types of adamant, all the impressions that have been received from the external world.

With reference to another sphere of influences

over the Florentine poet, it is evident, that the great Asiatic world was partially opened to him. The antique Eastern sources were accessible to Dante through the frequent communications of Europe with the Sarrazins and Mongols. It is well-known to all students of history, that in consequence of the contact of Christendom with the Islamism of Spain and Palestine, the scientific knowledge then existing, passed from one camp into the other, and, that active communications and correspondences were carried on between Bagdad and Cordova and Christian Europe, but more especially with Italy. Translations of Avicennes and Averrohes, extensively circulated at that period, must all have been known to Dante, as he frequently quotes them in his writings. His judgments evince a very accurate knowledge of the Musulman doctrines. The Sarrazins were imbued with many portions of the ancient Indian wisdom, which had exercised a beneficial influence over Persia and Egypt. This Indian wisdom reappeared subsequently, with its fundamental dogmas, in the religion of Boudha; which, being banished from Hindoustan, after sanguinary struggles, had established itself in Northern Asia, and subjected to its laws the scattered Mongolian hordes. Towards the middle of the thirteenth century, these tribes ravaged the Slavonian and Germanic regions; and, after sanguinary conflicts, the policy of the Roman pontiff succeeded in checking them; pacific relations were established between the Christian princes and the posterity of Jangez Khan. Ambassadors were received at Rome. Rome and France sent to their new allies missionaries, bearers of the true faith, with

peaceful messages. In the mean time, numerous commercial relations were also established; and accounts of travels, adventures, and foreign doctrines, became very popular, and eagerly sought after. Dante, with his thirst for every branch of knowledge that might be introduced in his vast poetical composition, could not fail making enquiries and researches on all the Eastern tenets and manners. He must have met more than once Tatar ambassadors, and envoys, at the courts of the Italian princes; indeed, he seems to allude to it, and to quote them in testimony of his own assertions, (Inferno, XVII.) He was, therefore, in communication with the philosophy of the banks of the Ganges, independently of the faint knowledge he could derive on the subject, from the traces of it, perceptible in Grecian wisdom, and even in several of the writings of the fathers of the church, all of which were so familiar to him.

The opinions and ideas of Dante frequently offer remarkable analogies with those of the Indian doctrine on the external form of the earth, and the manifold mysteries contained in its centre. The Brahmas represent Mount Merou as the pivot of the world, with all the regions inhabited by men and geniuses teeming at the foot of it; the earthly dwelling of the Gods being fixed on its summit. Thus, in the *Divina Commedia*, the mountain of Purgatory is described as the centre of the continent originally destined to be inhabited by man—it is crowned by the sweet shades of the earthly Paradise. The dismal realm of the Indian evil spirit is, like the empire of Satan, carved in the bowels of the earth, con-

sisting also of various circles which descend successively in endless abysses, and their number variously reported, is frequently that of nine or one of its multiplicates. The same crimes, the same tortures, —burning sands,—oceans of blood in which the tyrants are plunged—scorching regions succeeded by frozen states and compartments, are also to be found in the Indian Hell. There are still more intimate points of resemblance to be met with; for instance:—the singular opinion of Dante, that the souls severed by death from the bodies in which they were dwelling, are clothed in an aerial form. This hypothesis often renewed and re-introduced in Christian philosophy, as in Swedenborg, for instance, is no where to be met with, more completely developed, and with greater analogies than in the Indian systems. In other cases, however, the eastern ideas are solely introduced by Dante, in order to be refuted. Thus the theology of Brahma admitting the existence of two distinct souls in man,—the one personal and individual, confined to the knowledge of individual facts, the other being immutable, the rational soul of the world partaking of the deity itself, and destined to the knowledge of universal truth, is a theory that had been reproduced with great éclat by Averrohoes during the disputes of Scholasticism. The Catholic doctors had assailed it, and Dante joins them in the twenty-fifth Canto of the Purgatory to defend and maintain the unity, the indivisibility, and consequently the dignity of the human soul. It has been seen that virtue and vice, good and evil,—whether isolated or struggling with each other—form the great inspiring categories of Dante, which preside

at the same time over his conceptions. In depicting Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, his intention was to represent the three manners of being of humanity, the three phases enjoined by the creator: vice; passion, which is the struggle between vice and virtue, comprising expiation also, and finally virtue, or the recompense. Now, this doctrine with insignificant modifications, is found in the most ancient writings of the Brahma school, and this fundamental principle has continued to form the basis of all the theological schools of the Indian sects.

Asia, nevertheless, could not be much more to Dante than an obscure mysterious region. He must have beheld with exultation the splendid realm of Grecian philosophy; he penetrated into its various phases, described in many excellent works of the ancients, especially of Aristotle,—its most perfect historian—with whom he must have been early familiarised through Brunetto Latini's works and tuition; Dante quotes him seventy times in his *Convito* and evidently shelters himself with pride under the authority of his name; he bestows upon him, the most enthusiastic appellations; such as, "The Doctor of reason," "The Master of those who know," &c. He considers Aristotle and the Emperor as the two great authorities,—philosophical and temporal—which would suffice to ensure long ages of temporal prosperity to mankind. But still further; in recapitulating the errors of the philosophers of former ages, whose researches were directed towards the discovery of the sovereign good—the ultimate end of human existence—he demonstrates how this truth was dimly perceived

by Socrates and Plato, but cleared from every obscurity by the genius of Aristotle. And Dante remained ever faithful to his love and admiration for the Stagyrite; no lukewarmness ever came to mitigate his ardent feelings on the subject; and he did not forsake him, as asserted by Ficino and Brucker, who represent the Florentine poet as one of the most illustrious disciples of Plato. Dante considered Plato as one of the great precursors of Aristotleism; he frequently mentions him with respect, and whenever he refutes him, he does so with the greatest deference; he was acquainted with his works through those of Thomas Aquinas, Boetius, Saint Augustine and other early Christian writers, whose writings are impregnated with the perfumes of the academy. All the conceptions of the Italian poet on the commencement of things bear a flagrant analogy, it is true, with those of Plato; the principles of the academy on all questions appertaining to the moral world are also faithfully reproduced by the poetical philosophy, the principles of which are that all light streams down from the bosom of the divinity—that love is the great principle inciting to activity; and also that, one half of our earthly destination, is required for the acquisition of knowledge, the other half being reserved to active duties. The analogies between the Swan of the gardens of Academus and the Eagle of Florence become still greater if they are followed in the consequences to be deduced from their principles; they both rise to the same lofty heights in their delineation of the Divinity and of virtue; with both, the sublime instinct or divine ray called conscience, conducing to virtue, divides as it

approaches its end; they both admit that virtue, although one and sole in her essence, assumes practically four principal forms, namely, Prudence, Temperance, Force and Justice—and God being the supreme source of every virtue, all the aspirations of the soul tend towards Him—and, the soul's yearnings for the contemplation of the Deity, not being destined to be accomplished on this earthly life, the radiant perspective of immortality with its rewards, is to be unfolded beyond the grave; in short, the purest features of idealism may be seen in both, and with both, may be inhaled the highest spiritualism. Nevertheless, Dante never diverges from the terminology and method of Aristotle; on some points especially, on those which refer to the constitution, the faculties as well as the destination of man, he remains immovable in his confidence, and proves himself his disciple according to the general acceptation of the word.

Dante's intimate knowledge of the writers of Greece and Rome, his decided taste for their conceptions, did not affect his studies of the doctors of the Christian church; he was deeply versed in all the phases of the western Latin school; he frequently quotes its great writers, often alludes to them, and, it has been a subject of astonishment that he is absolutely silent on Raymond Lulli, Duns Scott and Occam, who inaugurated a new era of scholasticism at the commencement of the fourteenth century. The philosophy of Dante may be justly considered as destined to revive or reflect exclusively the placid, majestic greatness of the thirteenth century, which is characterised by a combination of the four

great powers of human thought: Erudition,—Experience,—Reasoning and Intuition. Albertus Magnus seems to have been one of the great sources from which the poet-philosopher has drawn abundantly; his astronomical and meteorological comparisons may have been suggested by Roger Bacon, with whose labours, however, he does not appear to have been very familiar. But the indefatigable energy of his genius found a rich, inexhaustible mine in the new speculations of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventura; his deepest sympathies were manifestly for those two illustrious men. Dante beheld the deep gloom that followed their death; he beheld in every direction, the abundant traces of their learning and of their virtues; he became deeply impressed by the feelings of love and respect which they had inspired to all their cotemporaries, without distinction; and, his philosophical judgment anticipated the solemn apotheosis of the church, by placing the two angelic doctors of the school, in one of the most beautiful spheres of his Paradise, above the happy multitude of the doctors of the church. His sympathies for Saint Bonaventura, must have gradually grown deeper as he discovered in him the same secret inclination for the doctrine of Plato. The Saint quoted none of the philosophers of antiquity with so much predilection; he defended him against his assailers with a sort of filial piety, and he certainly clothed with his mysticism, the Platonic, philosophic, Idealism. But, in reality, is there not a connecting link, or a relationship between mysticism and idealism? Do they not both consider the communion with the Divinity as the principle of

all light and the end of human actions? With this difference, however, that this principle in mysticism consists, it may be said, of a supreme but dreamy ascendancy of reason over the senses —of a higher but unearthly theory of ideas; whilst idealism admits of the superiority of spontaneous inspiration over reason, indulging in burning ecstasies, yearning after an external action, incited by virtue, and thus establishing, far beyond the former, the ascendancy of the heart over the mind, or permitting the imagination to exercise an absolute control over the heart. From such a combination, however, arose another source of the constant habit and necessity of allegorical expressions and legendary allusions. The philosophy of Dante, consequently, is impregnated with mysticism; it is contemplative, ascetic, and symbolic. We have spoken of the mystical ecstasies which gave birth to so many extraordinary visions of their fugitive, evanescent nature, and of the mighty genius that has grasped them and given to them an immortal form.

The philosophy of Dante, we have said, is ascetic; in reality, his poem contains a complete ascetic system; all the mystical works of the middle ages are reflected into it. His observations on the relations between error and vice, between virtue and learning—his genealogical classification of the sins—his ideas on the reciprocal action of the moral and the physical—all emerge from the same source. The description of the peregrinations through the spheres of heaven, seems to have been suggested by several of the little works of St. Bonaventura; such, for instance, as *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*—*For-*

mula aurea de gradibus virtutum—De vii. *itineribus eternitatis.* The poet was familiar with every tradition, with all the Christian symbols. He had often learned them from the lips of their author; and when he reproduces, with consummate skill, those images, which were to him as so many familiar reminiscences, they have often been considered as the mere rashness of a disorderly genius. The ecclesiastical pulpits of those ages, the language in which St. Bernard and Thomas of Canterbury, electrified the people and made kings tremble on their throne, abounded with symbols and figurative expressions, the boldest and most beautiful of which have been reproduced and immortalized by the Florentine muse.

Let us now come to the other great master of Dante, Thomas Aquinas. The influence of the great saint was, perhaps, on the whole, the greatest of all on his age. The universality of his learning, the gravity of his demeanour, his genius for analysis and classification, as well as the extreme sobriety of his language, have frequently drawn comparisons between the *Doctor Angelicus* and Aristotle. He confirmed, however, the authority of the latter, and, having enriched the treasures of his science with the pure sap of Christian revelation, they produced better fruits, novel truths, and new as well as higher conceptions. The philosophy of St. Thomas, and of his school, is especially distinguished by the extensive and methodical number of proofs brought to bear on his theological principles and theses. It is scarcely possible to give even a feeble insight into this philosophy by a meagre sketch; nevertheless, a few words must be said on the subject,

to show, however faintly, its constant progression. It is divided into four series—the science of the Being, the science of God, the science of the spirits, and the science of man. The science of the Being takes its point of departure in the notions of substance, of form, of matter, &c.; and then proceeds to more express and vivifying notions; the Being, in his passage through precise deductions, has become successively, goodness, unity, truth: and through many abstractions, obtains a gleam of the Divine attributes, and afterwards beholds all the testimonies and demonstrations of the existence of God. Such premises would appear to bring naturally to a conclusion as to the indivisibility of God, which would reject the idea of isolating all the perfections of the Almighty, and the idea of analysing them successively and separately: but not so; on the contrary, this very indivisibility is adopted as a generating principle of all the perfections that are derived from it, namely—immortality, eternity, goodness, justice, beatitude; and these are adopted as so many terms of a continuous equation never ceasing to represent, under different names, the whole Divine Essence. And after that Essence comes the intelligent creature, invested with a vestige, as it were, of the Divinity. Among these, several are detached from the matter; they are the good and bad angels. The souls thus separated, whatever be their punishments or rewards, become the object of a special study, the details, boldness, originality of which, through their various phases, form one of the most extraordinary analysis in the domain of probability. As to man being a compound of

soul and body—incomplete without the union of both—the study on this subject becomes in itself a whole science. It was, in the first place, necessary to eradicate all the errors then existing on the nature of man, and then follows the analysis of the complex facts of human activity, distinguishing the various powers they manifest and their mode of activity: sometimes, three of these powers or faculties are enunciated—the nutritive, the sensitive, and the rational; at other times, they are divided into two—the *apprehensive* and the *appetitive:* the first of these is the visible intellect, alternately active and passive, illuminated from above by the rays of Divine reason, and from below by the light and influence of the senses and sensations; the second, comprised the blind natural appetites—the sensitive appetites, at once irascible and sensuous, and the rational appetite, which consists of the will itself; to those three natures of appetites corresponded three species of love. And further, the will or volition, confined to the pursuit of the good, namely, of happiness, had, in this sense, received from God a primordial impulse; but the means for attaining the desired end, being left to the free judgment, which could not be controlled, either by reason, sensibility, or the influences of celestial bodies. The free judgment, therefore, essential to all intelligent natures, remains in full possession of its independence, and exercises its privilege, the result of it being the selection of sin or virtue. The removal of sin, the possession of virtue, are to humanity the object of the labours and efforts of the whole life; and this labour in common is to be accomplished in the

bosom of society, protected by laws; the supreme eternal sovereign law dwelling in the realm of the Divine reason, which regulates the mutual relations of things as well as their methodical progress and object. From this source, therefore, emanates the authority of human laws, whether just or obligatory, with the strict reserve of not exceeding the boundaries of power or authority, and of never departing from a just distribution of all rights, all immunities,—political justice being the consequence of natural fraternity. Finally, over and above the societies of our globe, the city of Heaven is pointed out as a supremely consoling perspective; the dogma of a future immortality as well as the definition of man, forming the two premises, the end and result of which conduce to the ultimate and glorious consequence of the resurrection of the flesh.

Most of those philosophical conceptions are to be met with, scattered in the works of Dante; they have been a fundamental basis in the construction of his poem. The Psychology of Saint Thomas is admirably sketched by Philalethes in his beautiful German translation of the *Divina Commedia*. The poet, in thus placing himself under the auspices of Bonaventura and of Thomas Aquinas, continued the felicitous inspirations which had subjected him to the influences of Plato and Aristotle: with this difference, however, that he beheld the realization of union and harmony in the two most respected masters of dogmatism and mysticism. He saw, with a tender admiration, how free they were from every rivalry; how, encouraged by

the gentle and studious tendencies of their times, they put an end to the old festering dissensions of their age; and how they solved, jointly, by the most conciliating decisions, the most famous, difficult problems of their epoch. But Dante, and his great theological inspirers, were by no means mere continuators or expounders of the philosophical sects of Paganism. The blemishes and weakest points of ancient wisdom had their roots in its fixed principles of doubt. The essential truths, such as God, immortality, duty, were only dimly perceived through incoherent traditions, by mutilated consciences; and, thus disfigured, they were reduced to the state of mere conjectures; the most patient laborious researches, the exercise of the purest reason, only led to uncertain results. The noblest doctrines, therefore, stood on no firm basis; the most sacred principles were ever subjected to new discussions, and a small number of moral and metaphysical problems absorbed the intellect, the time, and labours of various ages. With Christianity, those great eternal truths were revived with a novel vital freshness, not only in their primitive purity, but with renovated energy and concise precision. Those truths once firmly implanted on the authority of faith and reason, and universally known, they became immutable. All that remained to be accomplished was, to study their mutual harmony, their developments, and those other truths of a secondary importance. The great paramount principles being sheltered by the shield of religion, human intelligence remained freer in its appreciations; it was delivered from all anxiety and pre-occupation respecting the

fundamental basis and ideas, and thus enabled to analyse boldly the ramifications of the profane science. Christian philosophy, rejecting every shade of doubt and error, prepared the subsequent labours of those who, in the following ages, devoted themselves to the study of nature, and of all those who were destined to co-operate in the reformation of societies. Christian philosophy in its best and purest days was eminently eclectic; if it revived many of the doctrines of the ancients, it gathered the flowers of their systems and renovated their beauty in the atmosphere of the new faith. In this eclecticism, Dante remained a faithful disciple; but, subsequently, a master of it; and through it, a perfect representative of his age.

The great Florentine poet, therefore, stands surrounded by all the authorities of Asia, of Greece, and of Western Europe. His skill in collecting, classifying, a mass of conceptions, of maxims, and of symbols, despite so many obstacles, and so much confusion, equals his extraordinary learning. His genius, although in possession of all the intellectual Past of the middle ages, was not confined to this, we have seen; he not only revived the Past with vigour and originality, but anticipated the Present, and prepared the Future. Great minds manifest themselves in two ways—by discoveries and by methods. Philosophy seems especially destined to direct the efforts of the sciences in attaining truth; and in this respect Dante was one of the great masters of method; for, besides the streams of light he shed on many subjects, with his creative genius, he influenced deeply many departments; he at once

gave a new practical direction to philosophy, and delivered it from the fetters of scholasticism. Several respectable treatises on economical questions, or on ethics, were then in existence—many scholastic doctors had effected much towards the perfecting of the individual—the sages of antiquity, for the prosperity of nations—still, all those labours and efforts were void of unity, and consequently powerless. The middle ages were a period of enthusiasm, and not of action; science, despite its progress and development, was lavished and exhausted in endless excesses of self-contemplation, whatever might be the efforts and protestations of a few superior individuals. Dante appeared, and gave a bold lasting impulse in assailing, fearlessly, all abuses, all excesses, and every exclusiveness. He yielded to the necessity of preserving something of the existing terminology and classifications in order to be intelligible to all, and this was his only concession. He attacked boldly all the superstitions then flourishing under the name of logic, not only in their existing state, but at their very source, namely, the vices of human nature. In thus stigmatizing the rules and principles accepted generally, he felt it his duty to propound others which he conceived to be purer and superior; then, inspired by his genius, he laid down systematically those brief, comprehensive, pregnant maxims, in which he prescribes the exact limits of reason, the extirpation of all the roots of prejudices, and, subsequently, the observation of facts, the precedence of the reasoning faculties, the perseverance in meditation, and the manner of discerning the various modes of certitude appertaining to the

different orders of ideas. This may not be considered as a complete arsenal for effecting an intellectual revolution, but it was a noble prelude with invaluable materials for the future; it was an attempt of great magnitude considering the age; and it was continued by a series of successors down to Bacon. Philosophy was raised by Dante above all petty impediments, and delivered from the tedious, repulsive forms of scholasticism; he clothed it in the greatest epic splendour, with the flexible, energetic language of the people. He thus realized the great wish of his heart, to prepare the sacred food of enlightenment, so as to render it acceptable to all ages—to all men, however humble their social rank, however feeble their moral and physical powers. He established the freedom of thought; he proved the reciprocal independence of doctrines and forms of the school, rejecting the exaggerations of the present, and guarding against the injustices of the future.

It has been observed before, that among great minds disposed to mysticism many of them, through bold hypothesis, by a sudden intuition, or a continued consideration of final causes, have possessed *a priori*, a vague notion of several of the great discoveries which have only been realized in subsequent ages. Dante, we have seen, evinced many gleams of a prospective intuition; to all those already noted, may be added, his perception of the Newtonian discovery on the laws of universal attraction. Enthusiastic commentators are often disposed to attribute marvellous, almost supernatural, faculties to their hero; thus Homer's poem has been said to contain the germ of every science. The same exag-

gerations have been lavished with reference to the *Divina Commedia*. Dante's services, to his country especially, and to humanity, are great enough, such as they are. Guided by religion and sorrow, he has been able to probe the other world, and to learn our future state, according to our worth or our wrongs; he has pointed out to us the end of all human actions, namely, moral perfection. Whenever his pious solicitude inclines him to turn to the scenes in which the passions of his youth had involved him, he displays a surpassing vigour and moral originality. We have seen his convictions respecting the imperial authority: in his eyes, the sovereign with the crown was not much more than the immediate agent of the multitude; and it is very probable that the great movement of the French municipalities, tended to influence or strengthen his political opinions. Despite his aristocratic nature, Dante hated the privileges of birth more than any other; he assailed the inheritance of honours and dignities; he did not even spare the inheritance of property; his principles of sociology had their source in the highest regions of moral theology, and, through a series of deductions, he fixed upon, and enacted the most democratical maxims. He certainly prepared the path followed by Leibnitz, Wolf, Montesquieu, and Beccaria; many of his ideas can be met with among some of the greatest social reformers of our age. When St. Simon—who, on some points, was perhaps nothing more than an anachronism—promised, in our time, to each according to his capacity, and to every capacity according to its works—he merely repeated, and no doubt uncon-

sciously, one of the fundamental principles of the great mediæval poet.

The *Divina Commedia* can also be considered as a graphic sketch of universal history; and we believe that the old eagle of Florence, in his flight, was followed by the eagle of Meaux. Bossuet, by the character of his genius and his learning, offers peculiar analogies with the poet, although in a different sphere. No figure may be said to be absent from Dante's gallery of death; the patriarchs—the Greek heroes, sages, and poets—Peter and the Apostles—the fathers and the saints—all the sovereigns, all the pontiffs who sat on the throne, with either disgrace or glory—all appear, none are omitted. The religious and political revolutions of Europe are often represented by allegories expressive of the most severe opinions. Nothing human or Divine is forgotten. In this contemplation of humanity with its external transformations, unity never ceases to control the whole. In the various zones and spheres, it is man whom the reader beholds incessantly—man when fallen, or in expiation, or restored; and, at the close of the poem, may be contemplated the Divine Trinity blended with human nature. The poem is, in reality, a philosophy of humanity, a philosophy of history: it no doubt inspired Vico, Herder, and the Schlegels. Macchiavelli, one of the fathers of modern history, had learnt from no one so much as from Dante. If we divest our own time from its exaggerations, transitory states, and reactions, it is evident that the logical and political tendencies of the philosopher-poet harmonize with those of our own age. Men naturally experience feelings of great

sympathy and love for those who have resembled them in former periods; they fondly humble themselves before them, and they find a consolation in their superiority, along with gleams of legitimate hope, being fortified at the same time in their faith respecting the ultimate reign of truth and justice; they learn not to despair of human nature, whatever may be the deep gloom, the revolting shades that ever and anon transiently darken the surface of human societies. Every epoch, thus actuated, adopts and revives in this manner some immortal genius reflecting its own image, expressive of its hopes and aspirations. Hence, we believe, the unbounded admirations, the universal sympathies, the surpassing homages which, for these last thirty years, have been profusely bestowed on the memory and works of the great Alighieri, especially in his unfortunate Peninsula.

The subject which has during ages given rise to the longest and most ardent discussions respecting Dante, has been his orthodoxy. The poet's sarcasms directed against the profligacy of the clergy and the political conduct of the popes, —several passages of his poem ingeniously mutilated, such have been the sources of what may very justly be called the aberrations of commentators. Thus, in the last canto of the Purgatory, where it is predicted that an envoy from heaven will chastise the prostitute seated on the beast with seven heads and ten horns, and designated by the numbers which form the Latin word DVX, —alluding, no doubt, to some ideal deliverer or the Emperor—it was asserted that this envoy could be no other than Luther! Such

interpretations, and others of a similar character, made their appearance in the sixteenth century; they were answered and refuted by Cardinal Bellarmini, who became the organ of Italian patriotism. The same questions were discussed in France, and the disquisitions to which they gave rise are now totally forgotten. But in our time, two distinguished Italian exiles, Ugo Foscolo, and Rossetti, have revived, in England, with superior learning and imagination, many of the old interpretations; they have proposed an entirely new system for the comprehension of the *Divina Commedia:* with them, the allegories of the poem amount to an inadmissible excess; they reduce Dante to the character of a complete hypocrite. We have already alluded to that strange monomania of discovering allegorical allusions in the most simple and natural facts of the human heart. The profanations of Ugo Foscolo met with warm contradictions and protestations from Italy; they have been annihilated by Count Balbo. With respect to Rossetti, among the reprobations that assailed him, despite his great learning, the most conspicuous, complete, and profound, was that of A. W. Schlegel. The illustrious German critic has avenged the insult offered to the great Bard, and repelled for ever the intended stigma. Very recently again, we have had a renewal of such interpretations of Dante's poem. Mr. Aroux has published in Paris (1854) a work entitled *Révélation d'un Catholique sur le Moyen âge;* to him alone we will pause a moment, as he is certainly the most distinguished and learned in that class of critics. Mr. Aroux evinces a great knowledge of the poet, and of all

the commentators who had preceded him. His object is nothing less than to effect a revolution in the history of Christianity, philosophy, and literature. From his very quotations, however, his ideas do not seem to possess much originality. He mentions all those who have manifested a doubt on the identity, or on some character or other of the poem; and comes down to Mr. Rossetti, whose great work he seems to have merely abridged, although he affirms having added new researches to those of the Italian commentator; whilst, in another part of his work, he professes having done nothing more than abridged, elucidated, and reviewed Rosetti's voluminous exposition of his system. According to these gentlemen, Dante has been a member of one of the secret societies that preceded the Reformation; with them, the *Divina Commedia* has a continuous double meaning; it is a perpetual dualism; hence, a sort of dictionary is found necessary for its interpretation, in which, for instance, *Hell* is the world perverted by the popes—*Laura* and *Fiametta*, a personification of the empire and its virtues—*Babylon*, Rome—the *Wolf*, Guelf—*Satan*, *Lucifer*, the pope—the *Hound*, the emperor—the *Panthera*, Florence—the *Lion*, France; *Lucia*, represents some occult doctrine, from whence springs light. In this system, *Beatrice* represents three ideas which are not very clear, nor very interesting: and the love of the poet represents his zeal for all the doctrines hostile to the Catholic religion. Beatrice, despite the minute details given by the poet, Beatrice, so radiant in heaven, sinks into a trivial Ghibelline symbol; and the sorrows and tears of Dante were

nothing but a mystification. Well may Count Balbo exclaim, "Barbarians those, who cannot see in those beautiful verses, all the signs of truth and passion." All our observations on the hallowed and real figure of Beatrice may be remembered. Again, let us say, that she has undoubtedly been transformed in the mind of her lover, whilst her image remained indelibly fixed in his heart. Such a transformation, it is observed by Ozanam, is in accordance with the spirit of Christianity: many great saints have become the symbols of great perfections, and even of certain talents, after having been on earth the living models of those virtues which they represent, and, as it were, personify. Thus it is from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Divina Commedia*, that reality becomes transformed into an ideal, when the individual character and the ideal character of the personage attain a perfect union and cannot be separated. No doubt there are details in the hells of Dante and of Virgil, as well as punishments, the reasons of which cannot be understood, but it does not justify the supposition that they were conspirators or members of secret societies. The poets and philosophers who have described hell, have done so from their own point of view, and they could not be infallible judges. It is impossible for a man not to err at times, when, impressed by human actions without being cognizant of their motives, he presumes to bestow chastisements or recompenses, as if he could read unmistakably in the human conscience—above all, if, following the popular traditions, or listening only to his own passions, he plunges his

enemies into hell and sends his friends into heaven. No doubt, again, there are many allegories in the poem of Dante, but no free-masonry mysteries, no symptoms of an extensive anti-papal association with a mysterious language. The poet was no member of a secret society. He was not an heretic. Rome, the best judge on such a matter, has always believed in his orthodoxy. He was not a revolutionist in the factious sense of the word; he urged the separation of the temporal from the spiritual power of the pontiff, and wished for the unity of Italy under an emperor, because he considered papacy too feeble for such a government; and, with respect to this separation, many fervent members of the Church of Rome have, at all times, in all ages, and especially in our own days, entertained the same conviction.

However, we have not found that the recent French mutilator of Dante has met with any favour on the Continent. Rossetti's transformation, on the contrary, was very favourably received in England; and we cannot divest ourselves from the suspicion, that it arose partly from a latent ultra-protestant spirit, which exulted in plucking from the Church of Rome its noblest plume. The details testifying Dante's orthodoxy are innumerable. Among them, the following has often been overlooked:—the trio protecting the poet, are Virgil, Lucia, and Beatrice. Lucia was his patroness; she was the saint *(Lux)* protector of the organs of sight. Dante had suffered in his youth from a disease of the eyes; hence his faithful and grateful veneration for the saint.

Dante far from being himself an heretic, prepares in his Hell the most fearful sufferings to heresy and schism. He is inflexible. No political sympathy,—no civic virtue,—no heroism induce him to relent. He plunges in burning sepulchres Frederic II. and Cardinal Ubaldini, beloved by the imperial party as well as Farinata and Cavalcante, two of the greatest citizens of Florence. He glorifies the faith descended from above with heart-felt fervour. He everywhere pays a dutiful homage to his church, and speaks respectfully of her hierarchy,—of all her dogmas and forms of worship; finally, he places himself under the auspices of Saint Dominic. With reference to Rome and her pontiffs,—irrespective of the catholic church,—Dante manifests the most contrary sentiments; he sometimes addresses the eternal city in the most laudatory mystical language, with expressions of adoration; at other times, he assails her with invectives and imprecations; this wrath, however, is the wrath of love; it had its source in his anguish to behold Rome, so different from what he wished her to be, and the ideal of his most ardent wishes, reduced to the lowest, sadest reality. Rome was to Dante the centre of history and of humanity; he was, especially absorbed by her spiritual greatness; the remains of ancient Rome, do not seem to have occupied him much; a few melancholy, sublime lines on the enormous mass of its antiquities are the only indications of his impressions on the subject; and in this, he may also be said to be in advance of his age, for, the suggestive sentiment of admiration for ruins is evidently a modern sentiment, as much so, as the feeling of admira-

tion for the Alpine scenery; Mr. de Humboldt has remarked the indifference of the middle ages for the Alps, and Dante who crossed them, and visited them, cannot be said to be exempt from this indifference.

To return to the orthodoxy of Dante: the poet was cotemporary of fourteen popes; he has praised two of them,—has been silent on seven, and those whom he condemns, are previously and carefully divested by him, of the pontifical dignity, declaring boldly, on his own authority, the papal See vacant; he only stigmatizes the man—mortal and frail—with all the imperfections of humanity. Papacy was to him a divine institution, to prepare men for eternal life, for which reason alone does not suffice;—and the Pontiff the legitimate successor of St. Peter; he is most explicit on the subject in his *de Monarchia*. However indebted Dante may be to the system of the East and of Greece,—whatever may be his relations with the modern empirism and rationalism, he indisputably belongs especially to the two great mystical and dogmatic schools of the thirteenth century, whose dogmas and ideas he accepts and adopts without hesitation. If Homer was the theologian of pagan antiquity, certainly Dante is the Homer of Christianity, although he may not be considered as honored by the parallel, the former having brought down the Gods too near man, whilst the latter, raises man towards the divinity. In this point of view, we believe, as well as in the spiritual character of his symbolism and the grandeur of his conception, Dante leaves far behind him the ancients and the moderns.

Scarcely any thing remains of all that Dante beheld: the Roman empire has long ceased to exist; the Italian republics are no more; the causes of dissension of his times have become impossible; a few palaces, especially the palace of the Portinari at Florence, and that of the Malatestas at Rimini, a few ruins and coarse heaps of stones, are all that remains,—all that can be found of the dramatic period immortalised by the poet. The manners and aspirations have undergone a complete metamorphosis; the progress of the sciences give a character of puerility to his descriptions of the nine spheres and of the mountain of Purgatory. Thus, the political, scientific, elegiac interest which arose from the transitory things of our world, has vanished. The poem could not be much more than a document of great historical interest, if it did not contain other subjects that rivet eternally the meditative admiration of man: they are those ever attractive mysteries of death, object of the greatest meditation of men in all ages, and especially the sublime spectacle of human passions and of the developments, as well as the exercise of the human faculties, which remain immutable, in the midst of the ruins of ancient learning, and the amazing discoveries of modern science.

To conclude. Dante gave the first, great decisive impulse to the revival of the sciences, letters and arts of the ancients, in modern Europe, which entitles him to rank among the greatest figures in history. Although somewhat imbued with the habit and modes of the middle ages, despite his profound respect for Saint Thomas, Saint Bernard, and Saint Dominic, he is ever influenced by the

three great stars that are to direct him in philosophy, in politics, and in poetry,—Plato, Aristotle and Virgil. In reading Dante, the student feels the poet's enthusiastic admiration for the ancients, and his constant anxious object to link the philosophy of antiquity with the tenets of the new world; hence a real revival, a beautiful *renaissance* of short duration. He believed along with all the superior intellects of the fourteenth century, that, having once recovered and restored the science of the ancients, the light of Christianity would complete the universal science, and bestow the elements of perpetual happiness on the whole of mankind; such was the spirit of this *renaissance*, but this splendid ray of youth did not last. The Platonism of Dante, continued by Petrarch, lost its poetical fragrance and éclat when it passed through the closets of the scholars; its poetical essence, after having been exultingly inhaled by so many thinkers and writers, was treasured up subsequently by the artists who continued its resplendent beauty. And, independently of the glory that Dante shed on Florence by his genius and writings, his poetical philosophy —whatever may be its obscurity,—exercised an extraordinary influence over the whole of Tuscany; it roused the intelligence of all; a mass of facts novel and singular excited the curiosity of the Italians; it accustomed the Florentines to an intellectual life in the midst of their commercial and financial pursuits; the arduous study of the works of Dante exercised their penetration,—their judgment—the whole of their intellectual faculties. Without Dante, Florence would have

remained something like Carthage of old; she would be ranked among the great commercial cities; with her great poet, she had the glory and happiness of becoming the mediæval Athens.

APPENDIX.

New editions of the "Divina Commedia" Published in the Nineteenth Century.

1 La Divina Commedia con illustrazioni. Pisa, 1804, 1809. 4 vols. fol.
2 La Divina Commedia con note da Luigi Porticelli. 3 vols. This edition in the classici Italiani, is very faulty.
3 An edition with notes and various readings. Livorno, 1807. 4 vols.
4 An edition with notes by Romualdo Zotti. Londra, 1807, 1808.
5 An edition at Milan. 3 vols. fol. 1809.
6 An edition in 4 vols. edited by Ferdinando Arrivabene. Brescia, 1812, 1817.
7 The splendid Florentine edition in 4 large folios, with notes, illustrations, 1817, 1819.
8 An edition with commentaries by Biagioli. Paris, 1818, 1819.
9 An edition edited by Philippo Macchiavelli. Bologna, 3 vols. 4to., 1824.
10 The Divina Commedia from a manuscript of Boccaccio. Rovita, 3 vols. 4to.
11 Edition with notes. Prato, 1822, 3 vols.
12 Edition with numerous notes. Padua, 1822, 3 vols.
13 Edition edited by Scipio Colelli, Rieti, 1822.
14 An edition in London at Pickering's, 1822, 2 vols. 4to.
15 An edition after the Bertolian code. Udine 1823 and following years.

16 An edition with notes by Paolo Costa. Bologna, 1824.
17 An edition with notes by Franz Ambrosoli. Milan, 1824.
18 An edition with a selection of notes. Milan, Bettoni, 1825.
19 An edition with short notes. Bologna, 1826.
20 An edition in the Bellezze della Commedia di Dante Alighieri, Dialoghi di Antonio Cesari, Padre dell'Oratario. Verona, 1824–26, 4 vols.
21 An edition with analytical commentaries by Gabriel Rossetti. London, Murray, 1822.
22 An edition by Fleischer in Leipzig, 1826.
23 An edition with Ottimo Commento di un contemporaneo di Dante. Pisa, 1827-29, 3 vols. 8vo.
24 An edition with notes by Paolo Costa. Florence, 1828, 3 vols.
25 An edition with short notes by Torquato Tasso. Pisa, 1830, 3 vols. 4to.
26 An edition with notes and illustrations, Florence, 1830, 5 vols. 8vo.
27 Edition coi migliori commenti scelti da Guiseppe Bozzo. Palermo, 1832, 3 vols.
28 An edition with commentaries by Venturi, Giri Lami and P. J. Fraticelli. Florence, 1837.
29 An edition with notes by G. Borghi. Florence, 1837.
30 An edition with commentaries by Tomaseo. Venice, 1837, 3 vols. 4to.
31 Lo Inferno della commedia di Dante col commento di Guiniforto delli Bargigi, tratto da due manoscritti inediti del Secolo XV con note del avv. G. Zaccheroni, Marsiglia, 1838, per Leopoldo Mossy.
32 La divina commedia secondo l'edizione della Minerva di Padova (1822) colla giunta di nuove annotazioni. Firenze, 1838.
33 La divina commedia ridotta a miglior lezione coll' ajuto di vari testi a penna da Gio. B. Nicolini, G. Capponi, G. Borghi e T. Becchi. Firenze, 1839, 2 vols.
34 La divina commedia dichiarata secondo i principi della Filosofia per Lorenzo Martini. Torino, 1840, 3 vols.
35 La divina commedia con nuovi commenti. Firenze, 1840-41.
36 La divina commedia, edizione Rampini. Londra, 1841.
37 La divina commedia offerta alla intelligenza dei giovanotti. Milano, 1841.
38 La divina commedia col commento del Venturi, con postille d' altri e la vita dell' autore scritta da L.

Aretino, edizione arricchita per opera di A. Ronna. Parigi, 1841.

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dino Modenese. Modena 1842. Essa lettera mostra doversi scrivere i versi 87—90 del Canto XXV del Paradiso come segue: Ed io: le nuove e le Scritture antiche pongono il segno. Ed esso: lo mi addita. Dell' anime che Dio s' ha fatte amiche, dice Isaja.

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